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WITH
NEW LESSONS

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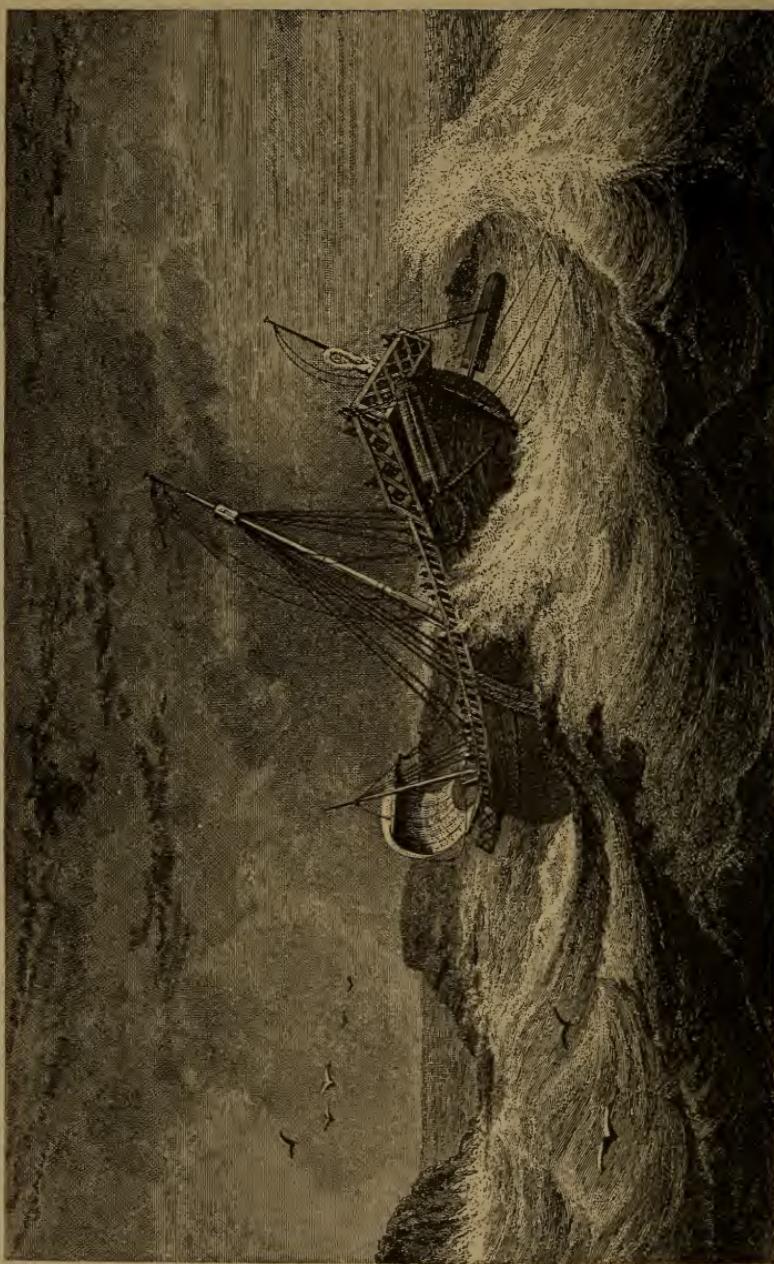
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Frontispiece.

ST. PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME. SITUATION OF SHIP ON FIFTEENTH MORNING.



OLD STORIES WITH NEW LESSONS.

SKETCHES OF SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS.

A BOOK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

BY

BENJAMIN B. COMEGYS,

AUTHOR OF

"TALKS WITH BOYS AND GIRLS," "BEGINNING LIFE," "HOW TO GET ON," ETC.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE DEAR MEMORY OF ONE WHO WAS MUCH IN MY THOUGHTS WHILE
WRITING THESE PAPERS,

WHO WALKED WITH ME TO THE PLACE OF BUSINESS AND TO THE HOUSE OF GOD;
MY COMPANION AND FRIEND, ON WHOM I HAD LEARNED TO
LEAN FOR SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT;
WHO WAS TAKEN SUDDENLY FROM MY SIDE IN HIS EARLY MANHOOD
AND USEFULNESS TO THE COMPANIONSHIP OF ONE WHO
LOVED HIM EVEN BETTER THAN WE DID;—

MY ONLY SON,

I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME.

The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain:
His blood-red banner streams afar;
Who follows in his train?
Who best can drink his cup of woe
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below,—
He follows in his train.

A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice
In robes of light arrayed.
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil and pain:
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train.—HEBER.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE one principal purpose in making this book : it is to do good to young people. I have had so much to do with them, especially in the later years of my life, that I have come to have something like the paternal feeling towards them ; and I am encouraged to issue this work by the many evidences that have come to me of the help that my other books have been to the young ; some of these expressions coming from persons of whom I have no other knowledge.

The preparation of these chapters has covered much time ; and in many instances I have forgotten to indicate by quotation marks what has been borrowed. Without hesitation I acknowledge my obligations to many writers for some of the thoughts and even for the language in this book.

The style of direct personal address, which is so marked, is the form in which the papers were originally cast, and is retained as not unsuited to the purpose of the book.

PHILADELPHIA, October 1, 1888.

Think not that thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not nigh ;
Think not that thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.
Oh, he gives to us this joy,
That our griefs he may destroy ;
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and mourn.—WILLIAM BLAKE.

Like one that waits and watches he hath sat
As if there were none else for whom to wait,
Waiting for us, for us,
Who keep him waiting thus,
And who bring less to satisfy his love
Than any other of the souls above.—FABER.

Am I going out into the business and turmoil of the day, when so many temptations may come to do less honorably, less faithfully, less kindly, less diligently, than the Ideal Man would have me do? . . . Am I going to do a hard duty, from which I would be gladly turned aside—to refuse a friend's request, to urge a neighbor's conscience? Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.—GEORGE MACDONALD.

INTRODUCTION.

OUR FATHER.

THE Lord's Prayer is often on our lips but very little in our hearts, and it is most imperfectly understood.

The Lord Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased his disciples came unto him. It is not likely that this was in a very public place, for on another occasion we learn that, when he withdrew for prayer, he went as far as a stone's throw from his companions into the deeper shade of the garden of Gethsemane. He was not given to praying in public places ; he condemned this habit in the Pharisees.

And yet he was near enough to the disciples for them to observe him ; and when his prayer was ended, they came and asked him to teach them to pray as John also had taught his disciples.

In answer to this request, he taught them that form of words which has come down to us through these many centuries, and which we have now in our own language. We call it the Lord's Prayer.

How long he was engaged in prayer, or what he prayed for, we do not know ; but if you or I had seen him as he was bowed on his knees, with clasped hands and face upturned to his Father in heaven, with what interest we should have regarded him ! It is a very interesting and a very affecting sight to look at people who are praying. One week day, in the grand cathedral at Cologne, a plain woman, with what

seemed a market-basket in her hand or on her arm, came in, placed her basket on the stone floor, and with her face to the altar kneeled down and said her short prayer; then arose, took up her basket and passed on her way. I was there for another purpose. The magnificent church, the splendid architecture, the surpassingly beautiful stained-glass windows, and the thought that pious men, hundreds of years ago, had conceived the idea of building the great church for the worship of God, deeply impressed me; but this poor woman, kneeling on the stone floor and saying her prayer, almost rebuked me.

If we had looked upon the Saviour as he was praying, should we not have wished that he might remember us in his prayer? We sometimes ask Christian friends to remember us in their prayers, but what would it have been to be remembered in his prayers?

And yet a prayer of his is recorded, word for word, in which we are remembered, not by name, but as a class. In the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, and in the twentieth verse, we read, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word." This includes you and me, if we are believers and followers of the Lord Jesus.

After our Lord ceased praying his disciples came and made a request. They wanted to be taught how to pray. "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Are we to suppose that the disciples of Jesus did not know how to pray? Is this strange? Are there not some of us even in this day who do not know how to pray? And we know more of Christianity than the disciples of Jesus did in the early part of his ministry. Yet how little we know of the nature of prayer to God! We say the Lord's Prayer

over and over again ; we follow in the prayers of others ; we hear and are supposed to join in the prayers of the church ; and our utterances often mean no more to us than the parrot when repeating the words of its keeper.

A young girl in a Sunday-school class that I was teaching lingered one day after the class was dismissed and asked me to teach her how to pray. She told me that she said her prayers every night and every morning, as she kneeled at her bedside, but sometimes she felt that she was not praying. She was only *saying* her prayers.

Some people seem to be praying who are only in the attitude of prayer. You bow your heads in church, in the school-room, at the table ; you kneel down in the family or by your bedside ; your thoughts wander ; you are drowsy ; you fall asleep on your knees ! How many people in church drop on their knees or bow their heads in their hands, and think little of the solemn words they are saying or to which they are listening ! And then how often do we pray for things which it would not be best for us to have ! Even in the first century the apostle James could say, “ Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend *it* in your pleasures.” (Revised Version.)

Our Lord answered the request of his disciples, and gave them a form of prayer—a model prayer. I think he did not intend that they should offer this prayer every time they met for worship or prayed in secret, though there is no objection to this if we wish to do so. As I understand it, he gave it as a model on which all prayers should be constructed. He begins by saying, “ When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven,” as St. Luke has it ; or, “ After this manner therefore pray ye,” as St. Matthew has it “ Our Father which art in heaven.”

The request which his disciples made was itself a prayer ; and it was answered as all real prayers are answered. The first words, "Our Father," are the key which opens the door of heaven. Think how many people have offered this prayer ! Beginning with the apostles, to whom it was first taught, and on down through the fathers of the Church, for more than eighteen hundred years it has been continually used. Paul probably offered it in his Roman prison, shivering with the cold and longing for the companionship of his son Timothy. The martyrs in the Coliseum about to be torn in pieces by wild beasts, the Christian disciple chained to the stake and soon to be burned, and many a little child in the agonies of death, have offered this prayer.

In how many languages has it been offered ! First in the Greek language, in which it was originally spoken, or rather probably in the Aramaic or Syro-chaldaic (which was the spoken language of that time and country); then in old Latin, in Syriac, in French, in Italian, in German, in Saxon, and down to us in English ; and now, in hundreds of the languages of earth, does this best of all prayers go up to God every day and every hour in the day. I have heard these sacred words as they were offered out in the woods where Christians worshipped God in tents on the camp-ground ; I have joined in their use with other voyagers on the deck of the rolling ship on the great ocean ; I have heard them chanted in the cathedrals of old England over and over again in a single service by boys' voices ; I have heard little Roman Catholic children say them as their *pater noster*, stopping at the church on their way to school with their little satchels on their backs ; and I am sure no prayer was ever so full as this and so well adapted to all people everywhere. They are the most familiar words in the Bible. They are the first words

we ever heard from the Bible. They are more often said than any other words of prayer. We cannot remember the time when we first heard them. It must have been as our mothers held us on their laps, or as we kneeled at their side resting our young heads on their knees.

Everybody understands these words, "Our Father," for even those who have not had *good fathers* have known other boys who have. We know how fathers love their children. We know how children love a good father. *What is a good father?*

A good father loves his children. They are always near his heart. When they are treated unkindly, how he resents it! Let any one speak harshly or unjustly or even slightly of them, how keenly he feels it! When they do well, how happy he is! In fact, most of the thrills of joy or pain that good parents feel come to them through their children.

A good father is thinking about his children and planning for them and working for them continually. No distance is so great as to separate them from him in thought. He may be very far from home, in a strange land and alone; he may be engaged all day in business or in sight-seeing; but when he returns to his lodging in the evening and finds letters from home and sits down to read them, and the home scenes and home life are brought vividly before his mind, see how his eyes glisten, and soon the tears roll down his cheeks. The love of wife and children has been in his heart all day and all the time, but now he is no longer in his lonely lodging; he is at home again in thought, and the children are gathered round him calling him father.

A good father teaches his children. He wants them to have all useful knowledge. He spares no expense in their education. He withholds nothing which will promote their

advancement in the knowledge of things that will make them useful and happy. He is careful also that no word shall escape his lips, and no act find expression in his life, the imitation of which would hinder or hurt his children.

A good father pities his children. When they are in trouble, he is troubled also. If they are sick, he is anxious; if they are ill, he is distressed. If misfortune in any form befall them, he is unhappy; if they fall into crime, he hangs his head, his heart is broken, he wants to save them. Life to him after this is not worth living. In all history, in all literature, there is nothing more sad, nothing more pathetic, than the story of David, who, when informed of the death of his son Absalom, slain in rebellion, "went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

God loves children not because they are good, for they are not all good, but because they are his children. A human father cannot help loving his children, even if they are not good. So God loves you and me, even if we do not yet love him.

God the good Father is thinking of his children. He teaches them. He pities them when in trouble or sorrow. "Like as a father pitith *his* children, so the Lord pitith them that fear him." He spares nothing, he withholds nothing, not even his well-beloved Son, to save us.

And see what privileges his children have! A child at home in his father's house has the freedom of the house. He goes anywhere and everywhere. No part of the house is closed against him. Nothing is too good for him. He is at home. His father loves him, and he knows it. He always has the audience of his parents. Other people call on bus-

iness or socially ; they cannot be sure of a reception, but the son is at home ; he is of the family.

A Roman emperor was once returning from successful war to the imperial city. It was a triumphal entry. The streets were thronged with people and lined with soldiers. The emperor, in his ivory chariot with gay horses, passed slowly through the crowded streets, receiving with evident pleasure the shouts of the people. Armed guards kept the passage clear and permitted no one to cross the street. Presently a boy darted through the crowd and ran up to the ivory chariot. The emperor stooped and lifted the boy to his arms. No other boy in the great city of Rome would have dared to do such a thing ; but this was the emperor's son : nothing was too bold for him.

There is one condition, and one only, which will secure to us the benefits of this relationship to a divine Father. There comes a voice from the heavenly world with these words : " My son, give me thine heart." It is the voice of our Father who is in heaven. It is a father's voice. There is no reproach for the past, however unworthy, ungrateful or sinful the past may have been ; it is only for the present and the future, Give me thy heart, my son !

Do not think you can put off this subject as long as you please, and then take it up as you please. This is a fatal delusion. And even if it were possible, think how ineffably mean and unworthy it would be to spend life in reckless wickedness, and then turn to God toward the end of life and offer him a heart wasted and impoverished by sinful courses ! " Let me have my pleasures," says one (meaning *sinful* pleasures),—" let me have my pleasures first ; let me sow my wild oats." Ah ! but remember, " whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If you sow wild oats, you will reap

wild oats. If you sow to the wind, you shall reap the whirlwind.

I have thus tried to present God as a Father; as one—

1. Whom you *can* love.
2. Whom you *ought to* love.
3. Whom you wish to live with in heaven.

Oh, if I could persuade any of my readers, even one or two, to look up to God who is “our Father in heaven,” and give him the heart which he so justly claims—a heart which can be given, but which, alas, can be withheld from him,—if I could prevail with one to do this, then should I bless God that he has given me the power to write and you the inclination to read these counsels. Then would you, as long as life lasts, find a deeper meaning in this best of all prayers. Then would you know, as you never yet have known, what it is to say,

OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN,

HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

THY KINGDOM COME.

THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS *IT IS* IN HEAVEN.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.

AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL:

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN.

Give us Abram's faith unshaken
That the promise must be true,
And what God hath undertaken
He assuredly will do ;
Which not only could unmoved
Trust the covenant of grace,
But the thing which he most loved
At the Lord's disposal place.

And he will come in his own time and power
To set his earnest-hearted children free ;
Watch only through this dark and painful hour,
And the bright morning yet will break for thee.

—*Lyra Domestica.*

He was a man of prayer, and therefore he was a man of power.

—GUTHRIE.

CHAPTER I.

ABRAHAM.

SOMEWHERE in the far East, and far back in history, before the Christian era, before Moses or David—indeed, almost at the beginning of written history—there lived a man distinguished above most men that the world has known. It is not easy to say exactly where he lived, but it was in the region watered by the great rivers the Tigris and the Euphrates. It was a country where the people worshipped the sun, moon and stars, and this man and his family probably worshipped these objects.

There came a call from the great God—how it came we do not know; a call to Abram to leave his country and go into a land which should be shown to him. There seems to have been no questioning about the reality of the call, and no hesitation in obeying it. It was a small company that set out from Ur of the Chaldees to begin the long journey. They travelled until they came to Haran, a place which we cannot locate with absolute certainty, and there they halted. How long they remained here is also quite uncertain; but there Terah the father of Abram died. Then Abram, with that divine call still ringing in his ears, gathered his family, his childless wife and orphan nephew, his servants and all his goods, and set out anew for the land which was to be given to him and to his descendants.

“Only one had heard God’s call,” but that was sufficient. We can easily imagine the scene as they prepared to start; for the customs of eastern people have come down with slight changes from that time to this.

The camels were collected and made to kneel down, as they do at this day, to receive the heavy loads that were put upon them. The articles of domestic use were very simple and few. These people did not live in houses such as ours. Most of them lived in tents, made of the coarsest stuff and easily taken down, folded and packed on the camels. The flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, the goats and the various domestic animals were grouped under the care of servants, each of whom was responsible for his charge. The travel was very slow, for the camels rarely went faster than a walk. Day after day they pursued their weary march over the sand-hills and the rough and rocky paths of that desolate region. If it was the summer season, they travelled in the early morning and evening; resting during the hot midday hours under the shelter of the great oaks which are sometimes found on the slopes of the mountain districts, or under the shadow of the great rocks, as was most convenient.

They must have passed near or through Damascus, that ancient city, one of the oldest cities of which we have any mention in history. Here probably Abram secured that servant who became his faithful and trusted servant—"this Eliezer of Damascus."

The rivers were crossed at the fords, there being no ferries at that time; and so they passed on until, crossing the river Jordan, they came into that land which God had promised.

According to the sacred record, their first resting-place was at Sichem, that beautiful valley between the two mountains Ebal and Gerizim; the same valley in which our Lord rested once at noon by the side of a well, when the woman of Samaria came and talked with him.

How long they remained at Sichem we do not know; nor do we know why they left that fruitful and beautiful valley;

but we find them next, at the distance of a day's journey or so, in the open country, or on the hills between Bethel and Ai. And we cannot fail to recall the interesting incident that occurred years after this. His grandson Jacob spent an eventful night at or near this place; that night when God was revealed to the wanderer, and his angels descended and ascended the ladder whose top reached up to heaven.

Here the tents were pitched as if for a long stay; and the country about here, a "high and beautiful plain, is one of the finest tracts for pasturage in the whole land." But although the land had been promised to Abram and his descendants, the promise was not yet to be fulfilled. There came a famine upon the land; the flocks and herds suffered for pasturage and water; the country was thinly settled, there was no storage of food, and the wanderer once more struck his tent and moved to the land of Egypt.

And here we meet with that incident in the life of the patriarch which discloses the first serious recorded defect in his character. He well knew that his coming to Egypt at the head of a large caravan would attract much attention, and he naturally feared that the appearance of his wife among such a people might lead to acts of violence toward himself or toward her. Failing to trust God who had so strangely called him, and who had led him so long and so safely in his journey, he deliberately agreed with Sarah his wife that she should pass as his sister. There is no excuse for his cowardice and falsehood.

But the fraud did not succeed; no fraud succeeds, except it may be for a time; it is truth only that prevails. The king discovered the deception and resented it, and drove Abram out of his country.

Back again across the weary desert went Abram and his

wife and all that he had, and Lot, his nephew, and all that he had, through the south country up to Bethel, which he had left to go to Egypt. The famine had passed ; the pastures were green again ; the streams were running with water and the flocks and herds had greatly multiplied. Now a new difficulty arose. The servants of Lot and the servants of Abram, jealous each of the other, jealous of the water springs and of the rich pasturage, quarrelled fiercely and bitterly. A separation was proposed. Abram, with great magnanimity, gave Lot his choice, either to remain where he was, in which case Abram would go, or to go anywhere he liked in the land. Lot, with characteristic selfishness, chose the rich lands in the Jordan valley, and departed to dwell in the cities there, while Abram remained up in the hills, content to live in tents and move from place to place, as he had always lived.

Then God spoke again to Abram ; and as if in commendation of his unselfish course (for God does most certainly commend unselfishness), he tells him to look around from the hills where he stood, for the whole land as far as he could see would be his and his children's forever. This led Abram to break up his Bethel camp again, and move southward toward Hebron.

Years seem to have passed, and the flocks and herds of the great chieftain were greatly multiplied, and his large family so increased that they numbered a small army, ready at short notice to take the field at their master's bidding.

An opportunity came. There was an invasion of kings from the East. They reached the fertile valley of the Jordan ; they captured and pillaged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah ; they carried off everything of value, and among the prisoners they took Lot and his family. News of the

disaster reached Abram ; he gathered his servants such as were trained to battle, as many as three hundred and eighteen, and pursued the retreating foragers as far north as the extreme limits of the land, almost to the mountains of Lebanon ; recaptured the prisoners, Lot and others, and brought back the booty which the invaders had stolen. But he refused, with the same generous unselfishness as he had shown in the separation from Lot, to receive any reward for his great services, although urged to do so by the king of Sodom.

I pass over the incident of the meeting with Melchizedek because there is not space in so brief a chapter to describe it, and because the story is quite full of incident even without this.

Now again God appears to him. It seems to have been a time of depression to the patriarch. Again and again had the land been promised to him and to his descendants. He was without children. He began to be afraid that he had not heard the voice of the Lord aright ; else why had he so long delayed the fulfillment of his word ?

It was night ; all was quiet in the tents of the sleepers ; the cattle were safe in the folds. Grave thoughts crowded on the mind of the patriarch ; he reviewed his life, the strange way in which God had led him, the promises yet unfulfilled, when suddenly an angel (as Sir Frederick Leighton presents the scene in his striking picture) stands at the side of Abram, lifts the folds of his tent, leads him out in the dark night, and says, “ Fear not, Abram : I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.” But Abram said, “ What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus ? ”

Then the word of the Lord came to him saying, “ This shall not be thine heir.” You shall have one of your own.

"Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them." And in that cloudless night and clear atmosphere the stars were indeed innumerable. Can you count them? As he looked up in amazement toward heaven the Lord said to Abram, "So shall thy seed be."

And Abram believed the Lord.

But as if this were not enough, God made a special covenant with his servant, and in that solemn and startling incident of the divided carcasses of the heifer, the goat, the ram and of the birds, and the burning lamps passing up and down between the pieces, he confirmed his promise with a more sure word of prophecy.

This certainly should have convinced the patriarch that he might trust the word of the Lord. But his faith was not yet strong. He was still childless; he was growing old, and in a weak and evil hour he yielded to suggestions which were not from the Lord, and sowed discord between himself and his wife. A child was born, named Ishmael, but it was not Sarah's child; it was not the heir.

Time passed; the boy Ishmael grew through the years of infancy and youth up to boyhood, and began to be about eleven years of age. But Abram knew he was not to be the heir; and God appeared again, changed Abram's name, and renewed his promise to make him a great nation.

One day about noon Abraham was sitting in the door of his tent, sheltered from the intense heat of the fiery sun, when three angels suddenly appeared in human form and talked with him. The simple and beautiful form of the story leads us to suppose that such visits were not uncommon. With true eastern hospitality, Abraham runs out to meet them, prostrates himself before them, invites them into the tent, washes their feet, and sets food before them—bread

and flesh. Then they announced the wonderful fact that Isaac is to be born, the real heir whom Abraham had so long expected. After this the men arose and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them a part of the way.

Late in the same day two of these strangers appeared at the gate of Sodom. The third tarried, and "Abraham stood yet before the Lord." What a scene, what a conversation, was that! The patriarch is told that the cities of the plain, Sodom and the others, were to be destroyed. Then he draws near, and in a dialogue certainly the most remarkable on record he remonstrates with the Lord on what he is about to do: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" The answer is, if there be fifty righteous men in Sodom the place shall be spared. But Abraham goes on, and the Lord bears with his expostulation, his importunity, his intercession, until the number is reduced to forty, to thirty, to twenty, to ten, saying, "I will not destroy *it* [the city] for ten's sake."

This ended the audience; "the Lord went his way," and Abraham was left alone. But there were not ten righteous men in Sodom, and the next day the cities of the plain were overwhelmed in a deluge of fire. Lot, however, was saved, for the two angels took him and his wife and his two daughters and dragged them away from the doomed city.

Soon after this, and for no apparent reason, Abraham again broke up his camp and moved toward the west or southwest. Possibly the awful destruction of the cities of the plain had something to do with this change. He left Hebron, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, tenting in Gerar among the Philistines.

And now he falls into the same folly and sin that he had committed in Egypt years before. This grew out of his want

of faith in God's word and promise. He told Abimelech, the king, that Sarah was his sister; the same fraud that he perpetrated upon the king of Egypt. But God overruled this also, telling the king that the woman with Abraham was his wife, and that the king must not touch her. Notwithstanding this strange introduction, the king treated Abraham well and permitted him to remain in the country.

We find Abraham shortly after this at Beer-sheba, a border city of the Philistines and the tribes of Canaan. Here probably Isaac was born, the child of promise, the real heir. It was a time of great rejoicing in all the families of the camp; for now it seemed that the promise so long delayed—the promise renewed by the three angels—was at last fulfilled.

It can easily be supposed, however, that the birth of Isaac would bring no joy to Hagar and her son Ishmael. While he was the only son he seemed to be the heir; when another boy came, that dream vanished. The boy Ishmael, now about twelve years old, was jealous of the new-comer; and when the young child was weaned, the big brother ridiculed and mocked him. Sarah the mother, regarding this as the beginning of discord between the boys, determined that the son of the slave mother, although her husband's son, should not live any longer in the camp, and insisted that he and his mother should be driven away. In a weak moment in Abraham's life he yielded to the passionate demands of Sarah, and the poor slave mother and her helpless boy were cruelly driven into the wilderness. But God "heard the voice of the lad," and delivered him, and made of him also a great nation.

Meanwhile Isaac grew up toward manhood. It was a time of peace and great prosperity. It was, again, a time of long silence. But the silence was to be broken, and broken in the strangest way. The word of the Lord came again to Abra-

ham, and in most startling and terrible words. He was told to take his son, his only son, the son whom he loved, the son in whom and through whom all the families of the earth should be blessed ; this son he was commanded to take to a mountain far away and there kill him and offer his body on an altar as a burnt offering.

With the same implicit obedience with which Abraham obeyed the first call to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees did the old patriarch take the lad in the early morning from his mother to the distant mountain. What could he say to the mother as a reason for taking away her son ? What could he say to the boy ? It was a three-days journey. What was the conversation by the way ? How could he so calmly lead the unsuspecting boy to his death ? How could he believe that it was a true word of the Lord that he was obeying ?

But he did believe ; and when they came near the place, he took the wood which he had brought to kindle a fire for the burnt offering, and put it on Isaac's shoulders, and leaving the two servants who had come with them, probably lest they should prevent his purpose, he took the fire and a knife, and the father and the son went to the place appointed. As they passed along, the curiosity of the lad was thoroughly aroused. He watched with the deepest interest all these preparations ; and presently he broke out with that question which seems to us so plaintive, so piteous : " My father . . . behold the fire and the wood : but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering ? " The question must have wrung the father's heart ; but the answer showed an unswerving faith : " My son, God will provide himself a lamb." Then the old man gathered stones and built the altar, and laid the wood stick by stick on the heap of stones. Then he bound the boy, and laid him on the wood on the altar. Then he seized the knife,

when a loud voice arrested him : “ Abraham, Abraham.” It was the voice of the Lord again, in infinite mercy. The father’s faith was tried ; it had proved true. There was no need of further trial : God had provided a sacrifice ; Isaac was saved.

I need say little more. They returned to their home. How the mother’s heart must have been stirred when she heard the tale ! Isaac grew to be a man. His mother died ; a burial-place was provided in the cave of Machpelah, and there she was laid to rest.

Then Eliezer, the trusted servant of Abraham, was sent to the far land of Mesopotamia, his native land, to bring a wife for Isaac, and Rebekah was brought (not unwillingly, it seems). And the story is one of the most simple and beautiful in the Bible. What remains of the life of the patriarch need not be here described. When he died, Ishmael came from his wandering desert life. He and Isaac buried their father by the side of Sarah in Machpelah.

This is but a glimpse of the life of the first of the patriarchs. If it shall lead any of you to read it carefully in your Bibles, I shall be more than gratified. There is hardly anything in our language more beautiful. Although Abraham was an explorer, a pioneer, a prince, the head of a great tribe and nation—a man of large wealth and influence—he will be remembered most of all for his religious character ; for, notwithstanding his many faults, he was a religious man.

He believed God’s word. That word came to him at many times, in visions and dreams by day and by night. He believed it, though he did not always follow it. His faith in God’s promise was such that in some mysterious way it was accounted to him for righteousness.

He obeyed God’s commands. He did not stop to count the cost of obedience. When the command came to leave

his home and go out into a country of which he could know nothing, he gathered his family and departed. Up and down in that strange land he wandered, pitching his tent here and there as he seemed to be led by the indications of Providence, twice at least going beyond the boundaries of the country which his descendants were to call their own.

So implicit was his obedience that even when the great trial came—when his faith was subjected to the severest possible test, even to slaying his only son—he did not flinch. His hand was raised to strike the fatal blow. Do you wonder that the Arabs from that day to this, over a large part of Asia and Africa, call him, as our own Scriptures call him, the friend of God? He was indeed the founder of the Jewish Church, through which comes to us our common Christianity.

One thought in conclusion. The Lord who called Abraham to his service still lives and reigns, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. He never changes. He rules in the armies of heaven and among men in our world. He calls upon us now, as thousands of years ago he called upon the sons of men. He calls upon you, not to join this church or that church merely, but to believe in him and obey him. He calls not in visions and voices from heaven, but through the Holy Scriptures, by his providence, by his Spirit and by the lips of his servants. He calls you to come away from evil company, from all sin. He calls you to come to him, to love him. Surely some of you have heard him, in the still hours of the night, on your sick-beds, in the death of friends, by some word spoken in his name, by some passage of Holy Scripture, by some prayer offered to his throne. Have you not heard him?

Do you intend to believe in him? Do you intend to obey him? Do you think you can afford to turn away from his

call? You are expecting some day to go out into the world and make your way there, fighting the many evil things that will oppose you, and you will need help, human and divine. Do you think you can take the risk of saying or thinking, "I don't care; I don't feel the need of this divine help; I will not have this King to rule over me"?



HEBRON AND MACHPELAH, WHERE ABRAHAM WAS BURIED.



— Many a languid prayer
Has reached thee from the wild
Since the lorn mother, wandering there,
 Cast down her fainting child,
Then stole apart to weep and die,
Nor knew an angel form was nigh
To shew soft waters gushing by
 And dewy shadows mild.—KEBLE.

For whom the heart of man shuts out,
 Straightway the heart of God takes in,
And fences them all round about
 With silence 'mid the world's loud din.—LOWELL.

Hurt no man more
Than you would harm your loving natural brother
Of the same roof, same breast. If any do,
Albeit he think himself at home with God,
Of this be sure, he is whole worlds away.—TENNYSON.

CHAPTER II.

ISHMAEL.

AN old man, married but childless, dwelling in tents in the plain of Mamre, has been promised by God that he shall be the father of a great nation ; of the greatest of all nations. He is rich and powerful, the head of a great tribe which goes up and down in the land where he pleases, and pitches his tents and folds his flocks in the midst of the choicest pastures. After a long time his heart is gladdened ; for, as it seems to him, the promise is about to be fulfilled by the birth of a son. The boy is reared as the heir of his father ;—although his mother is a slave. There appears to be no other way by which the succession from father to son can be secured ; and it becomes an accepted fact in the household that Ishmael is to be the heir of Abraham, and that through him the great nation is to be built up. At about fifteen years of age, by a ceremonial and formal rite, he is publicly received among the chosen people of God, and is regarded as the future head of the tribe when Abraham shall have finished his days. But another son is promised to Abraham, and this one by his beloved wife. And the whole condition of things is changed. Ishmael is not to be the heir ; he is not to be the father of the faithful ; he is to be set aside. The aged father loves his first-born with a peculiar love, and cannot bear to think that he is to be no longer regarded as the centre of his hopes for the future of his family. “To let Ishmael go, in order to look for another, when it seemed so against nature and reason that any other should be born, was the severest strain to which even this hero of faith had yet been subjected. In that

plaintive, clinging cry of fatherhood, '*O that Ishmael might live before thee!*' we hear with what a painful rending of heart the man tore himself from the loves and anticipations of a dozen years, to school himself into the expectation of a gift, new, strange and unheard-of—the gift of a miraculous child."*

When the new son Isaac is born and grows from infancy to childhood, trouble begins between the two boys; which ends in the elder, Ishmael, being sent away from his father's house, and all his expectations of being the heir destroyed; and Ishmael goes away into the wilderness, where, after almost perishing for lack of water, he finds a home among the men of the desert and becomes an archer, and founds a family of his own; but very unlike that which he thought was promised him. We know but little of him after this, except that he came back again to his father's burial, which was in the field of Ephron and in the cave of Machpelah.

When it is revealed to Abraham that the promise is to be fulfilled in Isaac and not in his first-born son, and that his plans for his oldest boy all go for nothing, he breaks out into that bitter cry, "*O that Ishmael might live before thee!*"

It is interesting to know that the first recorded prayer in the Bible is a prayer of a father for a son, an only son. (See Gen. 15 : 2; 17 : 18.)

It was not a prayer for life merely, although he asks that Ishmael may live. The lad was not sick, and there was no apparent or immediate apprehension that he would be in danger, or that his life was in peril. It was not the prayer of a father at the bedside of his dying son. Many a parent has hung over a dying child and cried out in bitter agony that the life might be spared. There are many such scenes

* Dr. Oswald Dykes.

doubtless to-day. I know of a young man whose mother has hung over him for long weeks, away from home and among strangers ; who sees him struggling with a most cruel and painful disease, which is torturing the poor lad until he screams out with pain that is absolutely intolerable ; and the prayer of that mother goes up to God every day, and many times a day, "O that my son may live !"

The prayer of Abraham for Ishmael was not a prayer for life then, as we generally understand the word ; it was a prayer for life in the highest and best sense, not merely for his person, but for his posterity ; not merely that his life may be preserved, but that he may live and prosper : "O that Ishmael may live before thee !"

The prayer was answered (all true prayers are answered), but not as Abraham asked. Ishmael did live ; he became the head of a great tribe, whose sons are, even at this day, living in and near the country from which the young Ishmael was driven out from his father's house.

The story suggests some thoughts which I wish to apply to you.

All who have the care of the young are anxious that they should live in the highest and best way. The anxiety is not merely that your lives should be spared so that you may grow up to be men and women ; most of you will probably live to maturity ; but the desire is that you should live before God ; and this was Abraham's prayer for Ishmael. If you are sick, and dangerously sick, everything is done to have you recovered from sickness ; that you shall all live not only, but live before God. Now of course we know that all lives are in God's presence ; that nothing can be hid from him ; but there is a special sense in which persons can live before him, and it is this that is desired for you.

It is quite possible for people to live without God in the world ; that is, to live without caring for him at all. It is quite possible to spend days and weeks without lifting up a prayer or a thought to God. It is quite possible to arise in the morning and go through the day, at your work, in the schools or elsewhere, and among your companions, and forget entirely that the great God is with you all the time, looking upon you, taking care of you, hearing all your words (and you know that some of these words are utterly unfit to be heard by any person, much less by him) ; I say, it is quite possible for you to go through all this and never have a thought of the great God. Alas ! this is not living in a true and good sense ; it is living as if you knew not God and cared not for him. Surely this is not what Abraham meant when he prayed unto God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!"

So sure am I that no life can be what it ought to be in this world, without the knowledge and the love of God—that no boy or girl can hope to be successful in any good sense without this knowledge and love of God—that I am constrained now, and always when I think of you, to say as the old patriarch said, O that these boys and these girls, my readers, might live before God !

This, however, is something which cannot be forced upon you ; no laws, however strict, can make people good. If we are not living as we ought to live ; if we are not doing our duty from day to day in an honest spirit ; if we are not trying to be what we ought to be, in our own minds and strength—asking strength from above to help us—it is in vain to hope that we shall be any better than we have been. If our lives have not been good and true lives, no appeals that I can make, or that any other person can urge, will ever make you

any better, without the help of God, and he is not likely to come to your help unless you ask him.

When I see, as I so often see, young persons living wicked and utterly worldly lives, forgetting all the good counsels that have been given them, with no respect for anything that is good, defying the authority of their parents and superiors, going to places where everything that they hear and see is corrupting and debasing, and reading books and papers which fill the mind with polluting thoughts, giving themselves up to drinking habits, and ready to break any law, human or divine,—I feel that this prayer should be offered by all devout and earnest hearts, O that these young people might live before God!

And I come to you with this prayer in my heart for you. I can't help thinking that there are many of my readers who wish to lead a new life, and who have some desire to live before God. Surely some have learned that sin is an evil and a bitter thing. There must be some that are sick of it and tired of it, and who would turn away from it if you only knew how. I believe if I were dealing with you separately, if I could take your hand and look you closely in the face, and should ask you if you did not want to lead a better life, I believe you would say yes.

Let me assure you then that it is quite possible, nay, it is certain, that you can lead a better life if you will only determine to do so, with the help of God. It needs no long preparation, no great and anxious struggle, to make this decision. There is no need of suffering, or of groping in darkness, and putting it off until it shall seem easier to do than it is now. All this is unnecessary and worse than useless. It is only necessary that you should come now to God your Father, in the name of Jesus Christ his Son, and ask

God for his sake to receive you, and forgive you, and make you his obedient, loving child. And if you do this from the heart, and with your whole heart, keeping back nothing, making a full surrender, you may be sure that he will give you a new heart and so help you to serve him.



WELL AT BEER-SHEBA.

We barter life for pottage ; sell true bliss
For wealth or power, for pleasure or renown.
Thus, Esau-like, our Father's blessing miss,
Then wash with fruitless tears our faded crown.—KEBLE.

Nor deem the irrevocable Past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If, rising on its wrecks, at last
To something nobler we attain.—LONGFELLOW.

Sick of my days,
I wished not life, but cried out, Let me die ;
But at Luz God came to me ; in my heart
He put a better mind, and showed me how,
While we discern it not and least believe,
On stairs invisible betwixt his heaven
And our unholy, sinful, toilsome earth
Celestial messengers of loftiest good
Upward and downward pass continually.—A. H. CLOUGH.

CHAPTER III.

JACOB AND ESAU.

Two boys were playing about the door of their father's tent in the old fields of Beer-sheba. It was a place of wells of sweet water and rich pastures for flocks and herds. These boys were brothers. Both had the same father, Isaac, and the same mother, Rebekah.

Their father was a man of substance; rich, indeed, for those days, quiet in his ways, thoughtful and religious in his life, not remarkable for any specially strong traits of character. The mother was from a country far from Canaan, and she seems never to have forgotten the home of her childhood. Among other defects of character, she made the mistake, not altogether unknown in our days, of loving one of her sons more than the other, and of allowing her preference to be known.

It is easy to imagine these two boys growing up together. They had no sisters. The flocks and herds which were about them always, made them well acquainted with the dumb creatures. Very early they must have learned to ride on the beasts of burden, as boys do now who are brought up in the country. The kids, the lambs, the young calves, must have been their playmates; and we do not like to believe that they treated the young things with cruelty. They did not go to school. There were no school-books, no school-teachers then, and all that they learned came from the lips of parents and associates and from observation.

As they grew out of childhood, the characters of these two boys began to develop. Esau, the elder, was a wild, rough,

restless boy, never satisfied with the quiet life of home. He wished to be out in the fields or off in the desert, associating with men and hunting wild animals. His bow and his spear were easier to handle than the things that belonged to the tent, the flock and the herd.

Does it not seem strange that his father Isaac, a man of peace, so quiet, so much at home that most of his life was spent within the circle of a few miles,—does it not seem strange that he should have loved Esau more than he loved his other son, Jacob? And does it not seem strange that the mother, Rebekah, who was so indiscreet and scheming and deceitful, should have loved the quiet, thoughtful, almost effeminate Jacob more than the bold, manly, reckless, wayward Esau? But so it is that we are often drawn to our opposites in friendship and affection.

The mother was Rebekah. Her name has come down to us as a type of all that is pure and faithful in the marriage relation. Well do Isaac and Rebekah deserve this good reputation. But alas for the children who are trained by an indiscreet mother!

As the boys grew to be men, their real natures were more fully acted out. Esau, the elder, rough, wild, restless, gave himself up to the pleasures of the chase; and the roving, unsettled life that his descendants have led from that day to this (some four thousand years) shows how this love of roving and of freedom has been perpetuated.

Let us look at the distinguishing traits in the characters of these two brothers, and see what contrasts there can be in children of the same parents and brought up in the same family.

Esau was frank, generous, free-handed, light-hearted, careless of the future, living for present gratification. Do you

know anybody like this? He was satisfied with plenty of corn and wine and the wild game that his hunting brought him. He was a hunter, a rover, a man of the field and the desert, enjoying the pleasures of the chase, content with mere present possession, living for this world only, with no feeling of a present, a living God. Yet the old father loved his willful and vagrant boy, and it is almost a wonder that his mother did not love him more than she loved his brother.

Esau was well aware that he was the elder brother, that the birthright was his, that he was entitled to inherit the father's blessing, and that he was to be the head of the tribe; but he cared little for that. One day, on returning empty-handed from the chase, weary and faint and almost famished for food, he found his brother Jacob, who had just cooked and was enjoying some vegetable soup. In his tired and exhausted condition he had barely strength to gasp out, Give me some of that red, that red. His mean and crafty brother, taking advantage of Esau's helplessness, offered to let him have the savory food if Esau would give him in exchange his birthright; and the foolish Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and Esau ate and drank and "rose up and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birthright." It was the act of a moment, the gratification of hunger; but it was a turning-point in his life, and he never could recall it, though he tried to do so with tears.

A few years after this the willful, wayward youth married, against the wish of his parents, bringing into the family a woman of a strange and hostile people, which was what might have been expected of one who lived for this world only.

When his father was getting old and his sight was failing, he asked Esau, the hunter, to bring him some venison; and

Esau started off to hunt it. Now appears the crafty, deceitful mother. She knew that Esau had been cheated out of his birthright, but the old father did not know it, and Rebekah seized upon this opportunity to seal the transaction with the father's blessing. She told Jacob to kill a kid, and she would cook it; and she took some of Esau's clothing and put it on Jacob, and put on his hands and arms and about his neck the skin of the kid just killed; and Jacob brought the cooked meat, and, with disguised dress, he presented himself before his old, blind father. Isaac was surprised that his son could have returned so soon from the chase. He was in doubt. Could it be Esau? But he felt the rough, hairy hands and neck, and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau." And then, without any further question, he ate the savory food, and gave the younger son the blessing that belonged to the elder. Jacob was successful in the outrageous fraud, and the mother's ambition seemed to be gratified.

But presently Esau comes in. He has been successful. He has caught or killed an antelope; he has cooked it; he brings it to his father. Ah! the blind old man perceives his mistake. He knows that he has been cheated and deceived by his wife and his younger son. But it is too late. The blessing of the first-born cannot be recalled. Then Esau breaks out into that great and exceedingly bitter cry, "Bless me, *even* me also, O my father! Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, *even* me also, O my father!" Another but a very different blessing was given to Esau. It was not that which he had lost.

There can be no peace in the family after this cruel and dreadful wrong; and Esau determined to nurse his wrongs until the opportunity comes to revenge himself by the mur-

der of his brother Jacob. The mother learns this, and Jacob is sent away, a fugitive.

Esau, smarting under the outrage which his mother and brother have inflicted on him, finds his way into the desert, and becomes the head of a great tribe, and is estranged from his father's house and his native land.

Turn now to the other boy, Jacob. He is the home boy; quiet, thoughtful, timid, but crafty and mean. In his early life there is not a single noble or generous trait. His mother's influence over him seems to have been most unhappy, and his life was full of trouble.

The first great wrong recorded of him was the advantage he took of his brother Esau's extreme need, robbing him of his birthright. He could have done Esau no greater wrong than this, and the way in which he did it made it worse.

The second great wrong was the gross deception practiced upon the old father in cheating Esau out of the blessing belonging to the first-born.

See how dearly he paid for all this! He is driven from his father's house by fear of his brother's vengeance; he becomes a fugitive; the plotter, the deceiver, is interrupted in his wrong-doing; he sets out on a long journey; he finds a home among his mother's kindred, who are no better than she is. They cheat him, and he cheats them; and after repeated frauds on both sides and long years of service, he leaves them to return to his native land, hoping his injured brother Esau has forgotten the great wrong done him. He learns that Esau is coming to meet him with four hundred armed men, perhaps to destroy him. He is filled with alarm, and, coward as he is, tries to make it up by appeasing Esau with large presents of cattle. To his surprise, Esau at first declines the presents, and falls on his brother's neck and kisses him.

Look at Jacob's later life. His sons and daughters give him endless trouble, and, after years of wandering and exile, he dies in a strange land, far away from his home.

But, with all these faults of character, and they are very many and very great, he BELIEVED IN GOD. In his flight from home, in the night, at Bethel, the angels of God met him, and God talked with him. On his way home, after the years of exile and hardship among his mother's kindred, the angels of God met him and protected him and blessed him. We cannot help wondering how such a man could have found favor with God, so that he should say by one of his prophets, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

The answer is that the grace of God is able to make of the "worm Jacob" one who feared and loved him. That timid, crafty, suspicious man was changed. The dross of his character was purged away. He was purified; he was made better. "The struggle of the baser elements of his character resulted in the triumph of the nobler;" and the cringing, cowardly man of the world becomes the strong man of God.

It is a most wonderful triumph of grace, but not more so than is often seen in our time. The grace of God in the gospel of Christ can and does save the vilest, the most helpless of men and women.

In all Jacob's unworthiness he never lost sight of God. He prayed to God, he acknowledged God, he feared God. He had a fixed purpose, though beset by much that was wrong.

Esau, the bold, dashing, generous Esau, lived entirely for this world, having no thought of God, and, so far as we know, never offering one prayer to God. He might have been a splendid fellow. He had many excellent traits. He was glad to gratify his father by seeking his favorite food;

he loved his brother, who had so cruelly wronged him ; but his good traits, his amiable qualities, were unavailing for want of faith.

Such is a very brief sketch of two lives, that began at the same time, that were trained by the same father and mother, with the same advantages, and that grew wider and wider apart as they grew older.

Twice, and twice only, as far as we know, did these brothers meet after the great wrong was done. Once, as Jacob was on his way home with his great family of flocks and herds, when Esau behaved so handsomely ; and once again, at the funeral of their old father. After this we hear nothing of Esau, except that he returned to his wild and wandering life in the desert and in the strongholds of the mountains.

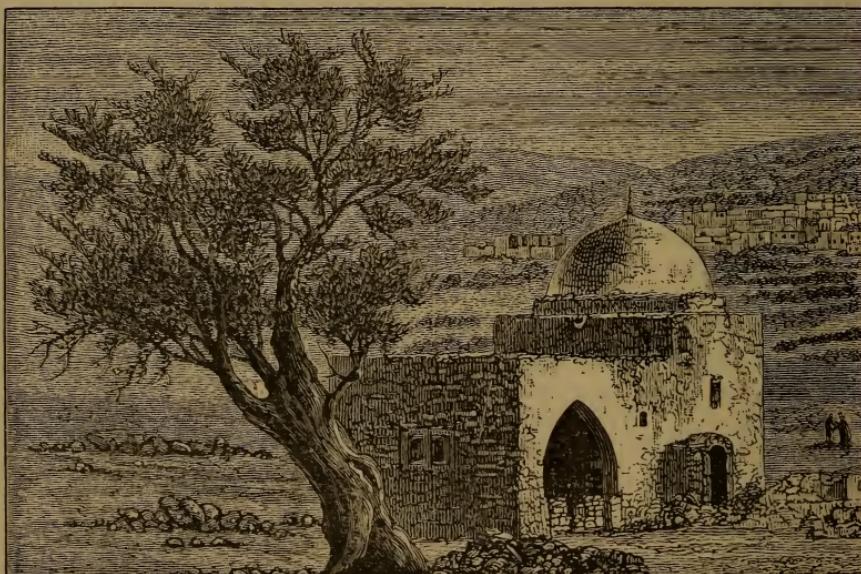
What lessons may the story bring to us ?

1. Good-hearted, generous, amiable traits of character do not of themselves make good men. They do make popular and sometimes useful men. It is a fine thing to be well thought of, to be above doing a mean, tricky thing, to be ready to help others when it costs nothing or does not require self-restraint, to behave one's self well because "it pays," so to speak ; but unless one is controlled by principle, that is, the determination to do right because it is right, and at whatever cost, all this amounts to nothing when we give account to God. Esau had many admirable qualities, but he was, at the best, only a man of the world ; and though he became rich and powerful and the head of a great tribe, he probably never forgot that he sold all that was most dear and manly and noble for a mess of pottage, for the gratification of his appetite.

2. No matter how low one has sunk in falsehood and fraud and dishonesty and vileness, the grace of God can

recover the sinner. It may be necessary, as in Jacob's case, that the discipline must be long and painful; yet God is able to make a man even out of a worm, "the worm Jacob." What the process was, how sorely Jacob was tried and punished, we know only in part; but the result was that Jacob was saved—saved "so as by fire," purified, made new. He even prevailed with God in prayer, and became one of God's own chosen, favorite people. What but the grace of God could redeem such a sinner!

I say then finally, if any of you are slaves of evil habits, whether they be habits of thought or speech or life, who feel the bondage and would be delivered, who know you are sinners and are ashamed of it, and who long to lead a better life, if you only knew how or if you only could, let me assure you that you may be delivered if you really wish it, by asking God to save you for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.



RACHEL'S TOMB, NEAR BETHLEHEM.

My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.—TENNYSON.

God's saints are shining lights; who stays
Here long, must pass
O'er dark hills, swift streams, and steep ways
As smooth as glass.
But these all night,
Like candles, shed
Their beams, and light
Us unto bed.—VAUGHAN.

Cedars were these in God's fair garden—constellations in the firmament of Christian nobleness. Clean hands had they, and pure hearts; and they spake the truth, and did the thing that was right, and never slandered, and did not think much of themselves, but were lowly in their own eyes; and therefore they did not fall.—FARRAR.

CHAPTER IV.

JOSEPH.

I WILL tell you of a young man who had the greatest possible difficulties in his way in early life, but who lived nobly and died happily. He was an eminently successful man.

In a rich, deep, well-watered valley a few miles north of the town of Samaria, a lad of seventeen years or thereabouts was standing at the bottom of a wide dry well and leaning against its side. He had been cast into that pit by his brothers, who were feeding their flocks in the valley, and who had been so long away from home that their father had sent this lad to look for them. He had found them after a long search; but instead of a kind, affectionate greeting from them, he found them ready to put him to death. For some time before this he had some remarkable dreams. These he told to his brothers, and they did not like them. Besides this, some of his brothers had been so unblushingly wicked that this son had felt bound to inform the father of it. They gave him no cordial greeting, therefore, but at once began to devise some means of putting him out of the way. One said, "Let us slay him"; but another said, "Let us not kill him, . . . but cast him into this pit." Some intended to let him starve there, and then tell the old father that some evil beast had devoured him. So they cast him or lowered him down into one of those wells or pits that were dug for the storage of water (so necessary in that country of few rains), some of which at this season of the year would be dry. After putting him in the pit, they coolly sat down on the ground near by—possibly within sound of his sobs—to eat. I hardly

know anything more unfeeling than this;—to sit down to eat their ordinary meal, with the utmost indifference, almost within sight and sound of a young brother whom they were about to desert to die.

The boy left to perish so inhumanly and by so awful a death is leaning against the side of the pit, a picture of despair. It is impossible for him to escape. The walls of the well are high and he has no means of reaching the top, and it is hardly likely that any one will ever hear his cries or pass that way and see him; while above him are some of his brothers looking down into the pit as if in mockery.

Look again! There is a caravan of travellers. There are camels laden with merchandise on the way from the East to Egypt. There are merchants with costly spices, so much needed in Egypt for embalming bodies and for incense in worship. Then these brothers of Joseph think that it will be better to take him out of the pit and sell him to these travelling merchants. They are now talking about the price; and they agree at last upon the small sum of twenty pieces of silver—equal to about ten dollars of our money—and the bargain is closed. They will keep the long and beautiful coat which Joseph's father had given him; they will dip it in the blood of the kid which they killed for food; and they will tell the father that they found the coat in some out-of-the-way place, and will lead the father to suppose that some evil beast has devoured Joseph.

Look again! It is the outside of a dwelling like a tent. An old man is sitting in the bright sunshine with a little boy at his side, and some women in the background. He is looking anxiously far off to see who is coming; for his elder sons

have been longer away than usual with the flocks, and he had sent Joseph to look after them, and he too lingered ; he did not return, and the father became very anxious. Presently some men approach, and long before they reach him he sees that they are his elder sons ; but Joseph is not with them. They come slowly up to him, knowing full well that his first inquiry will be for Joseph, and they anticipate his question by saying, “This have we found : know now whether it *be* thy son’s coat, or no.” They do not say “*our brother’s* coat,” but “*thy son’s* coat.” Ah ! there is the coat, the long, beautiful coat, which in his fond love for his manly son, his favorite son, he had given to him ; but it is stained deeply with blood, the blood of his darling son—for he believes the sad story. The blow is very sudden ; he cannot bear it ; he throws up his hands, overwhelmed with horror, and abandons himself to his inconsolable grief. He tears his own clothes from off him, he puts sackcloth upon his loins ; and when his sons (how *can* they ?) and all his daughters rise up to comfort him, he refuses to be comforted, saying, “I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.”

Look again ! The Midianites, who had bought Joseph as a slave, have arrived in Egypt, and having no need for such a youth, they propose to sell him as a slave to an Egyptian. They had paid twenty pieces of silver for him ; what they ask for him we do not know. They find a purchaser, however, in Potiphar, one of the king’s officers. His new master is much pleased with his slave ; for the Lord is with Joseph, and this made him a prosperous man. His master soon finds that he has a treasure in his new slave, and he rewards his faithfulness with rapid promotion. He places him over all his other servants ; he makes him overseer in his

house, and over all that he has; and the Lord blesses the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord is upon all that he has in the house and in the field. So fully did he give up everything that he had into Joseph's hand that it is said he knew not what he had, save the bread that he ate. This high position in the family of one of the king's most favored servants brought with it some grave responsibilities, and exposed the young man to a frightful temptation.

The next scene in the life of Joseph is one which I cannot describe. I can only say that there came a crisis, a turning-point in his life, when to hesitate would have been to yield, and to yield would have been the loss of all. His salvation was the belief in a present, an ever-present God. "His master's wife, too true to the type of old Egyptian womanhood as every ancient chronicle depicts it, first tempts him to sin, and then, infuriated at his holy resistance to her evil will, slakes her uttermost vengeance by a false accusation—not, as it seems, entirely believed nor wholly disbelieved—and by throwing the too-faithful slave into the dungeon where the king's prisoners were bound." But Joseph does not forget that he belongs to the great God, and he utters those words which will live as long as human language lives, and which have come to the help of many and many a poor tried and tempted one: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Look again! It is a prison—a dreary, gloomy prison. The walls are cold, hard stone, bare, and broken by a chain hanging from a staple in the wall, to which the prisoners are bound. A jug for water and an earthen dish are all that we see. There are three men sitting close together and talking

with each other. One of them is Joseph. He is respected and trusted by the keeper, and he is listening to his fellow prisoners, who are telling him of the very remarkable dreams they had last night. One prisoner has been the king's baker ; the other has been his butler or cup-bearer. For some reason they had displeased their master, and he had thrown them both into prison. They did not understand their dreams, but they thought they might have something to do with their deliverance from prison. God gave Joseph wisdom to interpret the dreams, and very soon they were fulfilled ; but the cup-bearer, who was restored to his office, and who promised to remember Joseph, forgot his promise, as many do forget promises they make (when in trouble) if only God will help them. So he forgot his promise, and Joseph languished in prison, it may be for long years. Do you suppose, in that long and cruel and most unjust imprisonment, he ever wished that he had yielded to that temptation and so sinned against God ? I do not for a moment believe it. He who has strength to resist a temptation to do wrong never regrets it, unless he is given over to his own ways.

Look again ! It is two years, and the butler has not remembered his promise to Joseph. Now Pharaoh the king has a dream. It is a very remarkable one, and there is no one who can interpret it. Then it occurs to the butler that there is one not far off who can explain dreams. He tells the king about the prisoner Joseph, still lying in the dungeon. The king sends for him ; he comes, and interprets the king's dream. So impressed is Pharaoh with the reality of the warning in the dream that he adopts Joseph's advice ; and in order most effectually to carry it out, he raises Joseph to the highest place in all the land. He becomes Pharaoh's prime

minister, and all Egypt is under his control. How wisely he administered public affairs I have not time now to tell you ; but his government was a complete success. What a change—from the gloomy dungeon to the place next to the throne !

Look again ! The scene changes. We are back again in Palestine. There is famine there. The family of Jacob feel it. The pastures are burnt up for want of rain. The flocks and herds are ready to perish, for there is little or no water to drink away from the great rivers. They have heard that there is corn in Egypt ; and so there is, thanks to the government of Joseph. The old man Jacob sends his ten sons—which are all except the youngest, Benjamin—down to Egypt to buy grain. There are the men, the donkeys, the camels, drawn up before the tent of the chief, who has given them money, and is now sending them away with his blessing,—for it is a long and perilous journey. The caravan sets out, and for many long and weary days they wind in and out the narrow paths and over the long sand-hills of the desert that lies between Egypt and Canaan. They reach the end of their journey ; they are brought before Joseph. They do not know him, but he knows them. He pretends to consider them as spies. They deny it, and to prove their innocence they tell him their history : that they are sons of an old man in Canaan who is suffering for food, and that there is one son left at home, and another who “is not.” Joseph at length consents to let them have grain, but refuses to allow them to return unless they will bring their youngest brother to him ; and to insure this, he keeps one of the brothers, Simeon, as a hostage. Then they talk among themselves, not supposing he understands their language, and charge each other with the guilt of their conduct toward their brother Joseph at the

mouth of the pit. . . . So they return with their sacks full of grain ; and when they open their sacks at home, behold, their money with which they had bought the grain is in the mouth of their sacks. This greatly troubles the old man their father, especially when he hears what the man the ruler of Egypt has said about his youngest son, Benjamin.

After a time the grain is eaten, and they must have more. With the greatest reluctance the old man permits his youngest son to go with his brothers to Egypt. They stand again before the great ruler. Now his heart is stirred within him ; for there is his own brother (all the others are half-brothers), and he can hardly restrain his feelings. He treats them well, gives them a feast, and sends to his brother Benjamin's plate most abundant portions—five times as much as to the others. He gives them the grain they have come for ; and by a cunning device determines to have Benjamin brought back to him. He is brought back ; and his brethren, still believing the great ruler to be some stranger, come before him. Then ensues a most affecting scene. Judah, the oldest brother, makes their appeal for the deliverance of Benjamin ; and in an address which is unequalled for pathos he tells the story of the old man far away in Palestine, and the effect it will have upon him if his youngest son is not restored to him. This is too much for Joseph. He sends the Egyptians out of the room, and reveals himself to his brethren. He breaks out into uncontrollable weeping, so that the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh hear him.

The rest may be quickly and briefly told. Joseph sends for his old father, who can hardly believe the story. He presents him to Pharaoh, who receives him most graciously and sets apart some of the best of the land for his home.

I know that this is the merest outline—only a glimpse—of

the life of Joseph ; but perhaps it is enough to lead you to read for yourselves this most interesting story.

What is the secret of Joseph's success ?

1. *He was pure.* At that turning-point of his life when everything depended upon the act of one moment, the thought of his duty to God kept him pure. How many young men and young women have fallen before such temptations and have been ruined ! It was not merely the memory of his long-lost mother, nor of his aged father, nor of his duty to himself and to his master who had trusted him so implicitly, that most impressed him, but, "How . . can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" No young man, no young girl, can hope to succeed who is not pure and who does not depend upon God.

2. *He was trustworthy.* In his father's tent, in his master's house, in the prison where he suffered though innocent, and in Pharaoh's government, he could be depended on always to do right. No one can hope to be successful unless he is trustworthy.

3. *He had a gentle, loving, tender heart.* He was a good son and a good brother. See how he loved his old father ! See how he wept on the neck of his young brother ! The long years of separation, the hard life of suffering he had led until his change came, the cares of a great government, had not weakened his love for his family. He freely forgave and even excused his brethren for the great wrong they did him ; he provided for them handsomely ; he loved them as if they had always loved him.

Now if boys and girls would be truly successful in life—I mean successful in the best sense ; you well know what I mean—let me charge you to be *pure*, to be *trustworthy*, to be *loving* to all, especially to your father's family, and care for them as Joseph did for his.

Thus thou wert known
To faithful men of yore;
Thee Moses knew, when through the desert track
He led the unstable, stiff-necked army back
From Egypt's servile shore
To their ancestral hills.—BLACKIE.

From him we learn how to be patriots; and how patriotism, like all other virtues, has its true root in piety.—GUTHRIE.

For meekness and calmness of temper need not interfere with a man's courage or justice, or honest indignation against wrong, or power of helping his fellow men. Moses' meekness did not make him a coward or a sluggard. It helped him to do his work rightly instead of wrongly.—KINGSLEY.



THE STATUE OF MOSES.

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CHAPTER V.

MOSES.

NEXT to the life of our Lord Jesus Christ there are three lives in the Holy Scriptures that stand out more prominently than any others. They are Moses, David and Paul. The biographies of these three persons, as given by themselves and others, are fuller in all important details than those of any other sacred characters.

The history of the Bible is largely a history of individual lives; and one of the best ways of studying the Bible, therefore, is to take up these lives one by one and follow them out from the beginning to the end.

It must be admitted that the materials for such a study of the life of Moses are not very abundant. He lived so far back in the history of the world that, although himself the first of historians, he has left few materials, except those belonging to the nation at large, for the compilation of his own biography. His life, indeed, was one of the grandest ever lived on the earth; "it was a power which produced the mightiest and most lasting results. Our life moves in the midst of those very truths which received their first currency and acknowledgment from Moses, and other minds like his; we are sustained and protected by them, we live in the hourly enjoyment of their blessed fruits. But how few are able to appreciate the power which first and alone grasps such truths, and is then able also to connect them with the innermost life of the nation and thus permanently establish them in the world!" *

* Ewald.

The life of Moses naturally divides itself into three portions of forty years each. The first period of forty years, from his birth, was spent in Egypt; the second period includes the time from his flight from Egypt to his return thither, embracing his shepherd life in Midian; and the third and last period of forty years includes his leadership of the Hebrew nation from Egypt through the sea to Sinai, and thence through the wilderness to the borders of the land of Canaan.

In a single chapter little more can be done than to name the principal incidents in the life of Moses, with a brief analysis of his character. These incidents are such as his birth and his rescue from the Nile; his adoption and education by the Egyptian princess; his escape into the land of Midian; the incident at the well, where with true chivalry he protected the daughters of Jethro; his long residence there; his marriage with Zipporah; his shepherd life; the burning bush; his commission to return to Egypt and deliver his countrymen; his modest declaration of unfitness for so great a work; the signs God wrought and permitted him to work to prove his divine authority; his journey toward Egypt; the meeting with Aaron; the interview with the elders; the demand upon Pharaoh and the refusal; the plagues, one after the other, each one more terrible than that which preceded it; the final reluctant consent of Pharaoh that the people might go; the institution of the passover; the death of the first-born; the departure; the pursuit of Pharaoh and his army; the night passage of the sea; the pillar of cloud and fire; the morning song after the destruction of Pharaoh's host; the march into the wilderness; the wells of Elim; the bitter waters of Marah; the murmuring for flesh, the quails sent; the encampment at Sinai; the

giving of the law; the burning mount; the golden calf; the setting up of the tabernacle; the establishment of the priesthood; the death of Nadab and Abihu; the march to Kadesh; the spies or scouts, and the rebellion of Korah; the death of Aaron; the brazen serpent; Balaam and Balak (the wicked prophet and the disappointed king); the encampment on the other side of Jordan; the vision of the land of promise which Moses saw but never entered; and his singular death and burial.

It is not an easy task to go back three thousand five hundred years and reproduce the scenes of that period, and describe characters and events which are found in only one history, and that history in a language which has no contemporary literature to illustrate it; but nevertheless it is an exceedingly interesting study, and if we are not able to attain results which are entirely satisfactory, we may at least from the sacred record itself, and from the explorations of modern travellers, find much that will help us in our appreciation of a life so grand and noble, and yet so humble and simple, as that of Moses.

The Jewish people have been fond of preserving incidents of their history, early and late, in song. Sir Walter Scott in his famous historical romance of Ivanhoe has put one of these songs in the mouth of the heroine of that charming story, the Jewess Rebecca. So in the twelfth century of the Christian era, looking back over the whole history of her people, and expecting to die a terrible death on the morrow, she sang:

When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out from the land of bondage came,
Her fathers' God before her moved,
An awful guide, in smoke and flame.

By day, along the astonished lands
The cloudy pillar glided slow ;
By night, Arabia's crimsoned sands
Returned the fiery column's glow.

There rose the choral hymn of praise,
And trump and timbrel answered keen,
And Zion's daughters poured their lays,
With priest's and warrior's voice between.
No portents now our foes amaze,
Forsaken Israel wanders lone ;
Our fathers would not know thy ways,
And thou hast left them to their own.

But, present still, though now unseen,
When brightly shines the prosperous day,
Be thoughts of thee a cloudy screen
To temper the deceitful ray.
And oh, when stoops on Judah's path,
In shade and storm, the frequent night,
Be thou, long-suffering, slow to wrath,
A burning and a shining light.

Our harps we left by Babel's streams,
The tyrant's jest, the Gentile's scorn ;
No censer round our altar beams,
And mute are timbrel, trump and horn.
But thou hast said, The blood of goat,
The flesh of rams, I will not prize ;
A contrite heart, an humble thought,
Are mine accepted sacrifice.

In the church of St. Peter in Vincoli, in the city of Rome, is Michael Angelo's famous statue of Moses. Its form is colossal, the right hand resting on the two thin plates or tables of stone. The eye does not know where to rest in this masterpiece of sculpture. The figure is seated in the central niche in one of the transepts (in fact it is the glory of that

church), with long flowing beard descending to the waist, with bowed head and deep-sunk eyes which almost blaze, as it were, with the light of the burning bush, with a majesty of anger which makes one tremble, as of a passionate being full of fire. "All that is positive and all that is negative in him is equally dreadful. If he were to rise up, it seems as if he would shout forth laws which no human intellect could fathom. His voice, like that of the gods of Homer, would thunder forth in tones too awful for the ear of man to support. There is something almost infinite in this statue of Moses. There is no softness or meekness in the sculptor's conception. He sees in Moses only the great Lawgiver. The great muscular development which has been so criticised is that of mind, not animal. His countenance is not softened by the twilight of sadness which is stealing from his forehead over his eyes. It is the same deep sadness which clouded the countenance of Angelo himself. But here it is less touching than terrible. The Greeks could not have endured a glance from such a Moses, and the artist would certainly have been blamed because he had thrown no softening touch over his gigantic picture. That which we have is the type of a terrible and unapproachable sublimity."

There is a tradition of Angelo that when he had finished the statue, he was himself so amazed with the life-like appearance of the figure that he raised his hammer and struck the marble on the knee and said, "Speak;" and thus the cracked seam in the stone is accounted for.

In considering in mere outline the character of Moses, let me say :

1. As a man he was *very meek*. When the people, hemmed in by the mountains and the sea and with the host of the Egyptians in their rear, reproached Moses as being the cause

of their misery, he did not turn on them in righteous indignation, as he might have done, and as most men would have done, but he simply bade them stand still and watch the doings of Providence, stand still and see the salvation of God.

When, on account of his marriage with an Egyptian woman, whether Jethro's daughter or some other we know not, Miriam and Aaron, his own sister and brother, conspired against him and spoke against him, vilifying and defaming him and bringing him into contempt among the people, a sin so flagrant as to call down God's displeasure in the leprosy which fell upon Miriam, Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." There was no resentment here. He forgot himself and the cruel wrong they had done him, and interceded for Miriam's recovery. He had not only not accused her to God, but he was the first to move to reverse the judgment. One of the passages, the third verse of the twelfth chapter of Numbers, written in later years and interpolated here, says, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth."

2. He was *modest*. This is one of the characteristics of true greatness. A man may be very good, his heart may overflow with love to his fellow men; but if he is fond of prominence and notoriety, seeking high places and rejoicing in public attention, you do not ordinarily think of such a man as great. Some of us can recall the names of persons who were foremost among the active and energetic in public matters and zealous in religious things, yet whose almost only fault is that they were not modest. If there is a public meeting called, such men are always at the front. If a speech is to be made, they are always ready to make it. If they meet

you in a railway car or in any public place, they talk in loud tones of the most sacred subjects; they offend the public taste and provoke criticism of no friendly nature.

You cannot think of Moses in such a light. When God met him in Horeb and spoke from the burning bush, revealing his commission, calling him to return to Egypt and go among his brethren, and then before Pharaoh, and declare that he must let the people go, we might have supposed that the mountain shepherd and herdsman, tired of his monotonous life, a life so tame in contrast with his life in Egypt, conscious too of his fitness for a higher sphere,—we might have supposed he would leap at the prospect of deliverance from his dull life among the flocks, and joyfully undertake the new mission. But, with that modesty which was so characteristic of him, and which is so rare among men in our times, he said, “Who *am* I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?” And even after a conversation or dialogue, one of the most remarkable on record, in which God with argument upon argument and miracle upon miracle shows him that it is his duty to go, he replies in that declaration, which under all the circumstances is without a parallel, “O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I *am* slow of speech and of a slow tongue.”

What man in our day can be found who would decline such an honor from such a source?

3. Moses was *affectionate*. He loved his father-in-law. When, after a long separation, Moses at the head of the children of Israel, whom he had led out of Egypt, comes into the region of Horeb, Jethro, taking Zipporah, Moses’ wife, and his two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, goes out into the encampment in the wilderness to meet Moses. And then occurred what may be seen now in the same desert when

friends meet after long separation. "Moses . . . did obeisance" to his father-in-law, "and kissed him ; and they asked each other of *their* welfare ; and they came into the tent."

He loved his brother Aaron ; he never strove with him. Once he remonstrated with him in the matter of the golden calf, but his feeling was chiefly for the people on account of their great sin, and for God who had so soon been insulted and forgotten.

He loved his sister Miriam. In the dim records that have come down to us there is little said of the incidents of domestic life, but we cannot doubt that Moses cherished a true love for the sister who watched the little basket in the Nile, in which his fond mother had placed him.

4. He was *patient*. No man ever had more to provoke impatience. No man was more misunderstood and more misrepresented than Moses. The people put the worst construction upon all his acts. Grovelling and selfish themselves, they measured him by their own standard and could not conceive of higher, purer motives than such as actuated themselves. But he bore with all their reproaches and never returned evil for evil.

5. Moses was *self-sacrificing*. When he came down from the mount where the law was delivered and found the people led away, unrestrained by Aaron, into the idolatry of the calf, he witnessed the first day the destruction, by the command of the Lord, of three thousand men. On the morrow, after he had charged the people with their great sin, he proposed to go up to the Lord and make an atonement for them, or intercede for them, as I suppose the word means, so that the judgment might be averted. And he said, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold ; yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin— ;" and then,

as if afraid to finish the sentence, he adds, “and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.” As much as to say, “If I cannot prevent their destruction, let me not see it.” But

6. Moses was *quick-tempered*. His anger grew hot when he saw the worship of the golden calf. And when the people strove at Meribah (hence called the waters of strife), he rashly, harshly said in language which could not be justified, manifesting a spirit from the consequences of which he never recovered, “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” “In this incident occurs the expression of distrust on the part of Aaron as well as of Moses. It is but a single blot in the career of the prophet, and it is but slightly touched by the sacred narrative.”*

Now all the qualities which I have mentioned he could possess, in some degree at least, without being a religious man. They are mental and moral characteristics, but not necessarily religious. The last one mentioned, “quick temper,” is an infirmity; but the others, meekness, modesty, affectionateness, patience, self-sacrifice, are virtues which all should cultivate.

7. As a *religious man*, Moses had such traits as these. He was *humble*. When God revealed himself at the burning bush, Moses hid his face in his mantle, for he was afraid to look upon God. Not merely from terror of the wonderful brightness did he do this; but he had just been told to take off his shoes from his feet, for he stood on holy ground. And in deep humility he wrapped his face in his loose outer garment, and bowed his head in the presence of the infinite God. And then when God told him what he must say to Pharaoh, and to his own people whom he was to redeem, Moses replied,

* Dean Stanley.

"But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee."

Moses was *prayerful*. This is so apparent in his whole history that one need not be at pains to furnish the proof. He lived in communion with God. He carried his troubles, his cares, to him who loveth and careth for all his children. When overwhelmed with the hardness of heart of the people, and their unwillingness to obey the commands of God, he would look toward the cloud, the symbol of divine presence, and fall on his face in prayer. So familiar was he with God that it was said, over and over again, that God *talked* with Moses; talked with him as a man talks with his friend, mouth to mouth.

Moses was *full of faith*. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews assures us of this in the wonderful eleventh chapter of that epistle, from the 23d to the 29th verse.

Moses was *anxious for the glory of God*. This is shown in his conduct when the Israelites complained on the return of the spies. When the ten spies or scouts returned with the unfavorable report of the land, its walled cities and its gigantic inhabitants, and the people broke out into those passionate exclamations, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!" and God said, "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them," Moses said, "Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou Lord *art* among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar

of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*. . . . Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." It was not so much the wretched condition of the people that distressed him, overwhelming as that was, as that the glory of God should be tarnished by an apparent failure to complete the good work God had begun, because he was not able to do it.

Moses was *submissive*. This is shown in the fact, so sad and so touching, that when God, for his great sin, had forbidden him from going over with the people into Canaan, he did not repine nor rebel, though he desired very much to go. It was a hard trial. But it was the will of God, and that was enough for him. He bowed his own will, the highest of all religious tests,—he bowed his own will to that of God, and was content only to see the land, but not to go over to it.

These traits that I have now mentioned—humility, prayerfulness, faith, anxiety for the glory of God, submission to the will of God—are all characteristics of the religious man, and were possessed by Moses in an eminent degree. They are never found, they cannot exist, in the heart of one who is not religious.

8. But Moses was not only a man, and a religious man; he was a governor. As such he was true to his religious

duties. He never failed to ask counsel of God. He had no congress or parliament or legislature to appeal to. His seventy elders were a kind of senate, but their combined wisdom was not greater than his trained mind. The theory of the Jewish state was that God was King; Moses was his representative in the state, and Aaron his priest. They needed nothing more in the way of government for church or state, and not until after the conquest of Canaan and their settlement in tribes in that land did it occur to them that any change in the government was desirable. Moses leaned upon God. He sought counsel of him.

9. He was also calm and courageous. There were times when he was sorely tried. When he stood on the shore of the Red Sea, with the cries of the timid, disappointed people whom he had led out from bondage filling his ears, he said, in all the assurance of conscious victory, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. . . . The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

10. That he was unambitious appears when he says with reference to his going from Horeb to Egypt to lead the people out, "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of *him whom* thou wilt send": that is, send by anybody rather than by me. When God threatened to destroy all the people and raise up from Moses a great nation, Moses, forgetting himself entirely, thought only of the character of God and the effect which such a destruction of his people would have on the surrounding nations. What other man that ever lived would have met, as he did, such a proposition from such a source?

11. As a governor and a civil ruler, he was true to his

religious duties and his loyalty to God ; calm and courageous, and what is more strange, he was not ambitious.

12. If we look at Moses as a general, a military man, we shall find that he was skillful in conducting open battles. We read in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, before the people reached Horeb, how they encountered the great tribe of Amalek, ruled by a chief under the title of king ; a wide-spreading clan, like the feebler Bedouins of our day, extending their excursions far into Palestine. This fierce tribe occupied the whole upper part of the peninsula, and were naturally the first to encounter and contend the entrance to the new people.*

Moses goes not into the battle personally, but he chooses as his lieutenant Joshua ; gives him the plan of battle ; commits the issues to the youthful warrior, and then retires to commune with God. It was a hard-fought battle ; won not by prowess only, but by the strong hand of God in answer to prayer.

13. He was skillful also in besieging towns. When, further on in the history, he was commanded by the Lord to avenge the children of Israel on the Midianites (Num. 31), he spoiled all their property, took their cattle, their flocks and their goods, and burnt all their cities. Sharp retribution was this, but it was carrying out the legitimate purpose of war, which is to subdue or destroy the enemy. And in this Moses was eminently successful.

Moses was skillful in the choice of officers. Not only was this shown in the selection of Joshua, who led the people out to the first battle and the first victory—the man who was full of the spirit of wisdom, on whom Moses had laid his hands, and in whose charge he left the people when he laid down

* Dean Stanley, History Jewish Church.

his life—but in Caleb also, the companion of Joshua in reconnoitering the land, and who united with him in the favorable or minority report. These had another and a better spirit than that of the ten cowardly spies or scouts whose report filled the people with terror. The choice of Caleb and Joshua showed Moses to be a rare judge of character, and of the fitness of certain men for certain positions.

14. Moses was not only in the highest sense a man, a religious man, a governor and a general ; he was also a judge, and as such—

a. He was strictly just and impartial. In the earliest days of his leadership, before the people had yet reached the mount from which the law was delivered, Moses was the only judge. There were no written laws ; the people brought their disputes before him, and without colleagues or assistants he heard all the cases. This was in addition to the other most arduous and overwhelming duties. These hearings consumed the whole day. Among so numerous a people there was necessarily a vast number of disputes and complaints. Moses' father-in-law looked on with surprise and remonstrated : “What *is* this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? . . . Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that *is* with thee.” And Moses said, “Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.”

Oh, if all the judges in our day were as conscientious and impartial, Justice would not be so often compelled to hang her head in shame!

b. As a judge he was incorruptible, and when in compliance

with the advice of his father-in-law he chose men out of the various tribes to assist him in his judicial duties—men to whom the numberless petty cases could be confided, while the more weighty matters he reserved for his own judgment—he chose for his assistants able men such as feared God, men of truth and hating covetousness.

15. Moses was not only a religious man, a governor, a general, a judge; he was also a poet. And as such he was the first of any note.

He lived in the sixteenth century before Christ, while Homer, the Greek poet, lived in the ninth or tenth century before Christ. Here is a space of from six to seven hundred years between the times when these two men lived. Now if you wish to know how wide a gap this is, go back six hundred years in our own English literature and see whom you find in the world of letters in our own language. None; there was no literature. The first English poet of any note, Chaucer, died in 1381; and Sir John Mandeville, who has been called the first English prose writer, died nearly five hundred years ago.

The poetry which Moses wrote was real poetry. Look at that magnificent song which they sang the morning after the night passage of the sea and the overthrow of Pharaoh's host. Look at the thirty-second and thirty-third chapters of Deuteronomy, where, in a song which in some respects is inimitable for the beauty of its figures and for its fine poetic taste, he rehearses the dealings of God with his people in their wanderings, and then blesses the people, tribe by tribe, in the spirit of inspired and true prophecy.

No production of a heathen or a Christian pen can compete in the higher aims of poetical excellence with this composition of the Hebrew lawgiver; and the only wonder is how

so many who are constantly reading it fail to discover those beauties which absorb the mind of the reader who has the taste to discriminate and the heart to feel.

In what an elevated frame of mind must the illustrious lawgiver have been when he composed this ode! Aged as he was and near to his dissolution, his mind was as fresh and vigorous as ever. And deep must have been the impression made upon the people's minds when they saw his venerable form, never more venerable than now, and heard the wondrous strains which fell from his inspired lips. Open the chapter and look at these glowing and impressive words. I will quote but one or two verses as specimens.

For the Lord's portion *is* his people;
Jacob *is* the lot of his inheritance.
He found him in a desert land,
And in the waste howling wilderness:
 He led him about,
 He instructed him,
He kept him as the apple of his eye.
As an eagle stirreth up her nest,
Fluttereth over her young,
Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them,
Beareth them on her wings:
So the Lord alone did lead him;
And *there was* no strange god with him.

"How beautiful is this imagery, and how striking to a people who must have observed the care of the eagle for her young! It presents also a lively picture of God's dealings with his people; for, to induce them to leave Egypt, he had 'stirred up their nest,' and rendered that land, in which they would otherwise have settled down, a land of suffering and trial, so at length they were glad to leave it, even with the prospect of a journey through the wilderness. But I have

not time to dwell, and must therefore leave you to read this incomparable ode, reminding you that it is to a great extent applicable to the Christian Israel, and is calculated to encourage, to comfort, and to warn the church of God in every age and in every place.”*

Look, too, at the ninetieth Psalm. It has been called the funeral hymn of the world. It is associated with the saddest moments in our lives—the death and burial of our friends. I know that the authorship of this Psalm has been questioned, and there are those who feel quite certain that it belongs to a later period than that of Moses; but until stronger arguments are brought to sustain this view than have yet been presented, very many readers will adhere to the old view, that it was written by Moses after the doom of the forty-years wanderings was pronounced on the people. As a composition it is full of beauty; its figures are natural and appropriate, its language even in our translation tender, plaintive, and yet grand and majestic.

16. As a historian Moses was the oldest, for he was the author of the Pentateuch, the first five books in the Bible. The oldest Greek historians of whom we have any knowledge, Herodotus, the “father of history,” Thucydides and Xenophon, lived one thousand years or more after Moses.

He was very *simple in style*. See the first chapter of Genesis, which is a model of brevity and perspicuity, and is remarkable for the absence from it of all adornment. Witness also the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, containing the account of Abraham’s journey to Moriah to offer Isaac in sacrifice; a narrative of most extraordinary simplicity and beauty.

He was eloquent, as shown in the forty-fourth chapter of

* Thornly Smith.

Genesis, where Judah's speech to Joseph is recited, and in the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis, containing Jacob's dying charge to his sons; and truthful, for he never exaggerates, but writes his history in the most direct and explicit terms.

17. As a teacher, "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (so the martyr Stephen said). Earnest, practical, explicit, faithful, thorough; for he says in the thirtieth chapter of Deuteronomy, "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. . . . I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing*; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

18. As a prophet, Moses was counted the greatest. In Deut. 34:10 it is said, after his death, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." And Moses, in repeating the law to Israel, said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." And our Lord said (John 5), "There is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" He was also abundant in predictions, and unfailingly accurate.

But the time came for Moses to die. Until very recently it has seemed impossible to identify the mountain on the top of which Moses was called to lay down his life; but within a few years an English clergyman, Canon Tristram of Durham, has, he thinks, quite certainly ascertained the very mountain peak which in the thirty-fourth chapter of Deuter-

onomy is called Nebo. It is one of the peaks in that range of the mountains of Moab over against Jericho, and in the plains at the foot of which the camp of Israel lay.

The view from that mountain height is in some respects unparalleled; for all the objects of the vision are enriched by sacred associations.

Mr. Tristram was anxious to verify exactly the view which the gaze of Moses took in from that mountain top, and he made three visits there for the purpose. But on each occasion there was a haze from the heat which dimmed the distant features and outlines, producing a sort of mirage which rendered it difficult clearly to trace distant objects. Still he had a clear distant view of western Palestine and the whole Judaean range from Hebron to Galilee. He could see the west side of the Dead Sea, and Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Mizpeh. Even Ebal and Gerizim were very easily made out, and the opening of the vale of Shechem. Carmel could be recognized, but he could barely make out the Mediterranean Sea; and though it is certainly possible that it might be seen from that elevation, he was not sure that he could see more than the haze over the plain of Esdraelon. Mount Hermon certainly could be seen in a clear atmosphere over the Jordan valley. He thought he saw the wady up the course of which was the natural ascent to Nebo, and by which Moses, as he thinks, doubtless ascended with Joshua to the crest of the range. He thought he could trace the line of the path the whole way up.

“And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that *is* over against Jericho. . . . So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over

against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. 34:1, 5, 6).

The well-known lines of Mrs. Alexander, the wife of the Bishop of Derry, may properly close this fragmentary sketch :

By Nebo's lonely mountain,
 On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
 There lies a lonely grave;
And no man knows that sepulchre,
 And no man saw it e'er;
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
 And laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral
 That ever passed on earth;
But no man heard the trampling,
 Or saw the train go forth.
Noiselessly as the daylight
 Comes back when night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek
 Grows into the great sun—

Noiselessly as the spring-time
 Her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills
 Open their thousand leaves,—
So, without sound of music,
 Or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown
 The great procession swept.

Perchance the bald old eagle,
 On gray Beth-peor's height,
Out of his lonely eyrie
 Looked on the wondrous sight;
Perchance the lion stalking
 Still shuns that hallowed spot:
For beast and bird have seen and heard
 That which man knoweth not.

But when the warrior dieth,
His comrades in the war,
With arms reversed, and muffled drum,
Follow his funeral car.
They show the banners taken,
They tell his battles won,
And after him lead his masterless steed,
While peals the minute-gun.

Amid the noblest of the land
Men lay the sage to rest,
And give the bard an honored place,
With costly marble drest,
In the great minster transept,
Where lights like glories fall,
And the sweet choir sings, and the organ rings
Along the emblazoned wall.

This was the bravest warrior
That ever buckled sword ;
This, the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word ;
And never earth's philosopher
Traced with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.

And had he not high honor ?
The hillside for his pall,
To lie in state while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rock-pines like tossing plumes
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave :

In that strange grave without a name,
Whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again—O wondrous thought !—
Before the judgment-day,

And stand, with glory wrapped around,
On the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life
With the incarnate Son of God.

O lonely tomb in Moab's land !
O dark Beth-peor's hill !
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
And teach them to be still.
God hath his mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell ;
And hides them deep, like the secret sleep
Of him he loved so well.



MOUNT SINAI.

When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to thee.—FABER.

Sweet Ruth among the meadows !
Stay awhile, true heart, and teach us,
Pausing in thy matron beauty,
Care of elders, love of kindred,
All unselfish thought and duty.
Linger, Boaz, noble-minded !
Teach us, haughty and unsparing,
Tender care for lowlier station,
Kindly speech and courteous bearing.

And if thy gentle eyes
Gleam tremulous through tears, 'tis not to rue
Those words, immortal in their deep love's tone,
"Thy people and thy God shall be mine own."—HEMANS.

CHAPTER VI.

RUTH.

ON the brow of a hill overlooking a broad valley with a river winding through it, is a group of four persons. They are all dressed in the costume of that country and of that time. One is a man no longer young, with a shepherd's staff in his hand and his loose flowing garments gathered up as if for a journey. By his side is his wife, with a jar in her left hand, just ready also to start. There are two lads hardly beyond boyhood, one of whom has a heavy bundle on his left shoulder, supported by his arm, with the hand resting on his side; while the other lad is partly leading and partly driving a donkey heavily laden. A she-goat, meekly following, as a domestic animal, completes the group.

The man and the woman and the two lads are all looking eastward over the broad valley and the winding river, to the mountains beyond. They are all barefooted, and are just starting down the hill on their slow and painful journey.

Ten years have passed. Look again. There is another group. The chief figure is a woman with a sad countenance, tall and dignified, yet pale from suffering and bereavement. With her are two young women, hardly more than girls; one of whom is leaning on the bosom of the elder woman, her hands resting upon her shoulders. The other has turned away and covered her face with her left hand to hide her tears, while her right hand is held in the left hand of the elderly woman. They are all widows, *three childless widows*. The ever-present, ever-faithful donkey, with his burden, is waiting patiently by. They are all standing on the side of a

mountain, looking *westward* over the same broad valley and its winding river.

One of these young girls clings to the old mother as if nothing but death could part them. The other, not lacking in love, but perhaps in courage, is tearing herself away to return to her home. When she is gone the other two gather up their robes and start down the hill on foot.

Again we see the two women, with their donkey, having crossed the wide valley and the river, and found their way up the rocky road and into the narrow street of an old city. They are poorly clad, tired and dusty from their long journey on foot. Their appearance in the little town attracts much attention, as such a group would in any country town; and the gossips began to ask, "Who is this?" Presently one says, "Is this Naomi?" And the old woman answers, "Call me not Naomi" (that is, *pleasant, sweet*), "call me Mara" (that is, *bitter*): "for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"

Look again! There is the edge of a barley-field. A young woman has been gleaning the stalks of barley as they were dropped or left by the reapers and the binders. She has gathered quite a sheaf, and as she is tying the stalks in a bundle, the master steps up to the overseer and asks, "Whose damsel is this?" At this the poor girl falls down before the great man and raises her right hand in supplication, as if she would say, Do not send me away. I am poor; my mother is poor; I have come to the harvest-field hoping to gather a little grain.

The overseer answers his master's question by saying,

"It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab." Then the master, who seems to have heard the sad story before, touched by the forlorn condition of the poor girl, gives her full permission to glean in his field ; and not only charges his young men not to be rude to her, but tells the reapers to let some handfuls drop on purpose, so that the young woman may not go home empty-handed.

Another scene. We look upon a rich pastoral scene, for the fields around are waving with yellow grain or are covered with rich shocks of barley. It is noon. The bright sun, undimmed with clouds, is bathing all the fields with floods of light. The reapers are gathered in a circle, taking their midday meal of parched barley and sour wine mixed with water ; a very poor dinner, we should say, for harvesters. The master, in his turban and long beard and flowing robes, comes up to the group of harvest-workers leading by the hand this young girl, this stranger. He seems to say, Friends, here is a girl from the land of Moab. Though so young, she is a widow. She has followed her mother-in-law Naomi, whom some of you remember, from the land of Moab, where the poor woman and her husband and her two sons went ten years ago, and where all but Naomi died. She is very poor. She has come out to our harvest-fields to get a little grain for food. Be kind to her. Do not distress her.

And then, as Ruth sits among the reapers, the master (Boaz) himself helps her to the roasted ears of barley, until the meal is finished and they return to their work.

At the end of the day's work, when Ruth goes home tired but with her shawl full of grain, the heart of Naomi is filled with joy, not only at the food she has brought to the poor family, but that her daughter should have gone into the field of Boaz, who is a kinsman of Naomi.

Again we look, and see the gateway of the little city, where groups of men are gathered discussing topics of common interest, or transacting business, or settling differences or disputes. The master is among them. But he is there for no ordinary business. As he sits there waiting apparently for some one whom he is expecting, a man comes up as if going out at the gate, leading a donkey. Boaz calls out to him by name, to come and sit down ; the man obeys. He is kinsman to Ruth's husband, and according to the custom of that country and that time, he has the first right to ask the hand of Ruth in marriage. Boaz gathers ten men as witnesses, and asks this man if he intends to marry the young Moabitish woman. The man replies that he does not ; and then Boaz declares in the presence of these witnesses that *he* will marry Ruth, and seals this declaration by the strange symbol of plucking off his shoe and giving it to the other man. Strange wedding, you will say ; but a happy one, for the love they bore each other was founded on mutual respect.

Once more, we behold another group. An old woman, a young mother and a little babe. Naomi is living her youth over again as she looks on the child lying on her lap : the child of Ruth, her dear daughter-in-law, and Boaz. She is thinking of the days long ago when her own boys lay on her lap, and she looked down into their sweet and innocent faces.

Where are those boys now ? Alas ! they lie in their tombs in the country beyond the valley and the river, beyond the blue mountains, in the land of Moab. They died, both of them, while they were young. The mother's heart was torn with anguish as she followed them, one after the other, to the grave. No wonder she had felt as if even her name should be changed —as if she should no longer be called Naomi, but Mara—for it seemed to her the Lord had dealt very bitterly with her.

But Ruth is in that group ; and, leaning her elbow on Naomi's knee, and her chin upon her hand, she is looking into the face of her child, her own son, her little boy. What feelings thrill her ! She is no longer the young, desolate widow. She is no longer the foot-sore wanderer, turning her back upon her native land and the grave of her husband, and looking toward the land of the stranger. She is no longer the poor girl, picking up the barley stalks that fall from the hands of the reapers and beating out the grain, and taking it home in the evening to her mother. All that is past. Now she is the happy wife of the good Boaz, and this little boy into whose sweet face she is looking as only a mother can look, this boy is her own son.

Proud and happy mother ! Ah, if you only knew what we know—that years after this, and in this same city of Bethlehem, and descended from this very child, this little boy, another boy should be born, whom choirs of angels should welcome—if you knew this, your rapturous gaze would grow almost into divine worship !

This is a story—one of the most beautiful in the Bible or anywhere else. It is a love story. It is a story of poverty, of emigration, of marriage and death, of widowhood and desolation, and afterwards of virtuous marriage and happiness. A family becomes extinct ; a new family is founded.

Let me tell the story over again, very briefly.

The family of Elimelech, sorely pressed by famine in their native country, even in Bethlehem, which means “the House of Bread,” determine to go to a foreign land in search of better fortune. The father and mother and two lads, with all their household goods on the donkey or in their hands, set out from their old home, the home of their forefathers for many generations, across the Jordan valley and through one

of the passes of the mountains of Moab, and find a refuge in the country beyond. There the two lads, when grown to be men, marry young girls of that strange people among whom they have gone to dwell. Some time after this Elimelech dies. The strong man is called away, the widow is left desolate and a stranger. Then, one after the other, her sons also are called away by death, and the widow's cup of sorrow is full to overflowing. In her bereavement and utter desolation her thoughts go back to the home of her childhood. She has some friends there; some of her kindred will remember her. She determines to return. She sets out. There is nothing to take with her, she is empty-handed; a little donkey can take her and all she has on its back. But her two daughters-in-law, poor young things, are not willing to let her go alone; they set out with her. Naomi remonstrates. Why should they go? They have no friends in the land of Judah. Nobody there will welcome them. But they go on with her. At length they come to the mountain pass that overlooks the valley, where the rocks throw up their huge forms as if the great stone ridge had been parted to make a pathway; and there the desolate widow pauses to dissuade her companions from following her further. One of them throws herself upon the old mother's breast, clinging with fond tenderness to her, saying, in those most pathetic words which have come down to us in our own beautiful English, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

And we sing in our plaintive hymn—

People of the living God,
I have sought the world around,
Paths of sin and sorrow trod,
Peace and comfort nowhere found ;
Now to you my spirit turns,
Turns a fugitive unblest :
Brethren, where your altar burns,
Oh, receive me into rest.

The other, whom we need not charge with want of affection—who may have had friends in the land of Moab whom she could not leave, or who may have been unwilling to burden the aged mother with two dependent daughters-in-law, or who may have lacked courage to face the fatigues and exposure of a journey on foot to a land of strangers and of a strange religion—the other, Orpah, kisses her mother-in-law and turns back to her own people.

The journey of Naomi and Ruth is not very long ; they return to Bethlehem ; their arrival makes a great stir ; Naomi and her husband must have been people of some importance ; they find shelter, but still in extreme poverty. Ruth goes out to the harvest-field, and led by the good hand of the Almighty God whom she has chosen rather than the gods of her own people, she goes to the field of Boaz the rich farmer, where her modest, virtuous deportment attracts the attention of the master, in whom at last she finds a loving, faithful husband.

Among the many lessons that may be drawn from this simple and beautiful story, I mention but two.

1. *The turning-points in life.*—It has happened to many people besides poor Orpah, that there are times when the whole aim and purpose of life is determined by a single act. Some question of duty or interest is presented ; a choice must be made ; and on the wisdom or folly of that choice the

whole life for this world and the next may turn. It was so in the case of Orpah. The question for her was, whether she should go on with her mother-in-law and sister-in-law to Bethlehem, in the land of Israel, where she might be led to give up her native religion and worship the God of the Hebrews, or whether she should go back again to her idolatry. You know what she chose. We never hear of Orpah again; her name drops out of history; we know nothing whatever about her. She is gone. It was a turning-point in her life, and she turned the wrong way.

The same question was presented to Ruth. You know how she decided it. She gave up her home, her friends, her religion; she followed her mother-in-law, the good Naomi, to the land where she found a home and a godly husband, and where she became the mother of Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, from whom as concerning the flesh Christ came; for he is the son of David.

Has there not been a turning-point in your life, my young reader? Do you not remember the time, and the place, and the person, the great temptation, when the question arose, Shall I do this thing, or shall I refuse? Shall I forget the good God who has led me all the days of my life? shall I turn my back upon him, and go among those who do not know him or care for him in the least? Shall I give up my hopes of heaven—shall I deliberately sell my soul—for the pleasures of sin? Shall I shut myself out from all good people, and live with the wretched and miserable and lost; and all for nothing but sin? How did you answer these questions? You know better than I do. Did any of you at that most trying moment yield to the temptation? did you turn your back on the good and the true? did you turn away from light and peace, and choose the sinful, the wrong?

Oh, why did you not say to the tempter, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

2. The second lesson is, *God takes care of his own.* Orpah might have been one of his own. She might have gone with Ruth and have been saved. Ruth did turn the right way. She became a worshipper of the God of her mother-in-law, the God of the Jewish people. She chose him, not for what she expected to get in a worldly way, not for a home among the rich ; but she deliberately chose to follow her mother and her mother's God. And he took her for his child. She had no trouble after this ; she knew that the God whom she had chosen was able to take care of her, and she gave herself to him. See what a blessed choice was hers ! Her good mother was cared for ; she herself was cared for ; and she had the distinguished honor of being an ancestress of our Lord Jesus Christ ; for thirteen hundred years after this, the Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born in this very city ; as we celebrate his glorious birth every Christmas day.

My readers, the question is before you to-day. It may be another turning-point in your life. What will you do ? The choice must be made by you. You must answer the question. Oh, if I could answer it for you ! if I could make the choice for you !

On one side is the world, its pleasures, its folly, its baseness, its degradation, its foul language, its vileness, its unspeakable misery ; on the other is the company of the good, the pure, the clean, the kind interest of the best people, the sure hope that the great God, through Jesus Christ, will care for you with infinite love and tenderness in this life, and save you forever in the life to come. You have your choice ; you can turn to one side or the other, as you please. Which way will you turn ? Which will you choose, death or life ?

But thou hast said, The blood of goat,
The flesh of rams, I will not prize;
A contrite heart, a humble thought,
Are mine accepted sacrifice.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Few years, no wisdom, no renown,
Only my life can I lay down;
Only my life, Lord, to thy throne
I bring! and pray
That child of thine I may go forth,
And spread glad tidings through the earth,
And teach sad hearts to know thy worth—
Lord, here am I!—C. WHITMARSH.

As the child reposing lay
Ere he sunk in slumber sealed,
By the lamp's expiring ray
Israel's God his truth revealed.
Let *me* say, with lowly fear,
“Speak, Lord! I, thy servant, hear.”

“Speak, Lord! thine omniscient eye
Follows all my pilgrim way;
May the thought that thou art nigh
Guide in all I do or say.
Make me truthful and sincere:
“Speak, Lord! let thy servant hear.”

CHAPTER VII.

SAMUEL.

I WILL tell you of far-off times, in a far-off country, and of a little boy who at a very early age was given up by his mother to the service of the Lord in his house. Somewhere in the hills of Ephraim, a little way out of Jerusalem on the road to Jaffa, there lived a man named Elkanah, who had two wives: which it seems was not altogether an unusual thing in that day. One of these women, Hannah, was childless; and she was very sad, and distressed about it; for at that time and long before, and long after, every Hebrew wife longed for a son, in the hope that he might be the Messiah. Hannah's husband was a devout man, and every year at the great annual feast he went with his family to the Lord's house at Shiloh to make an offering to the Lord.

One day when Hannah stood praying with trembling lips, but with no spoken words, at the door of the tabernacle, the old priest Eli saw her and rebuked her; for he supposed she was under the influence of wine. It was a thoughtless and cruel charge; but the poor woman bore it meekly, saying, it was not so, that she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, and was pouring out her soul unto the Lord. The old priest then gave her his blessing and said the Lord would grant her prayer.

And the Lord did hear and answer her prayer; and when afterwards the child was born, the happy mother called him Samuel, meaning "asked" or "heard," because, said she, "I have asked him of the Lord."

For a while after this, perhaps three or four years, the

mother did not go with her husband in his annual visits to the tabernacle at Shiloh. She could not go, she said, until her child was weaned. And when that time came she presented herself with her offering of bullocks and flour and wine before the high priest Eli, and said that she was the woman he had spoken to three or four years before, and here was her little boy. And she had come to lend him to the Lord ; but the lending was really giving, for she never claimed him again, and she left him with the old priest to dwell in the Lord's house.

Did it not seem hard to take the little fellow from home while he was so young, a home that he would never go back to ? For, though the mother often went to see her little boy after this, so far as we know he never went home again.

And of what use could he be in the Lord's house ? What could a little boy just weaned do in the temple ? I suppose he could do nothing at first ; he must be cared for as other children of his age were cared for. He must be looked after every day, he must be watched and helped, he must be petted and loved ; and there must have been loving hands and kind hearts about him every day.

So his mother left him there with the Lord and his servant Eli. I think the heart of the old priest must have warmed toward the little lad thus thrown into his arms, for his own sons were, alas ! not good boys, they were very wicked. How they could have become so it is not easy to say ; their father must either have neglected them or their mother did, or else, like some boys that I have known, they broke away from all restraint and were determined to have their own way.

What must have been the feelings of the good mother when she left her little boy with the old priest at Shiloh and went back to her home ! It was the first time she had ever

been away from him. She had watched over him from his birth. All his wants she had attended to. She had no children until he was born, and she had devoted herself to him. Every night she may have tucked him into his little bed and kissed him. Every prayer she offered was for him. When old enough to talk, she had told him how to say his prayers to the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. There was no Lord's prayer then, or she would have taught him to say, "Our Father who art in heaven." And as soon as he was able to stand alone she taught him how to walk, or to run; for children always walk before they run. Now all this work is over. He has learned to walk; he has learned to pray; he has been told that he is to be the Lord's child, and the mother's care over him is at an end. He will no longer sit at her table, or take his food from her hands, or learn his lessons from her lips, and sleep in his own little bed at home. She has given him up to the Lord's priest, to live in the Lord's house as long as he lives.

Now again the question comes, Why was such a lad, so young, received into the Lord's house? What could he be? what could he do?

It may have seemed a small matter that the young boy should be shut up away from his home life, away from all company of his own age; dedicated, consecrated to the Lord. To many people that looked on, it was not worth a thought at all. As parents nowadays who have given their children to the Lord do not know what they may become, so neither did this good mother nor the aged priest know what the Lord would do with this little lad.

The boy "ministered unto the Lord before Eli." What were these services? They must have been small and slight, for he was only a little lad. He could at least feed the lamps

with the olive oil ; he could bring the incense to the priest ; he slept in the holy place, and his special duty was to put out the sacred candlestick, and to open the doors at sunrise.

You would think that everything was most favorable to the education and the training of this boy for whatever the Lord may have intended him to be and do. In such a life, so carefully guarded, you might think there was no temptation to evil. Living in the Lord's house, what could hurt that innocent young life ? Ah, there is no place secure from temptation. No walls, however high and strong, can keep out sin ; no life, however secluded and solitary, can be free from temptations to evil. The good old priest had two sons (who were either big boys or young men). They were every day in company with this lad, and they were evil and corrupt and base. They defied the authority of their father ; they profaned the Lord's house ; they corrupted the Lord's people. If the mother of Samuel had known the character of these two sons of Eli whom her son must see so much of every day, how anxious and distressed she would have been ! For her care over him was not quite at an end, although she had given him unto the Lord. She still loved him and prayed for him. And as she sat at home thinking of him and wondering what she could do for him, she thought she would make him a little coat, and take it to him when she went up to the tabernacle at the annual feast. No doubt the priests of the tabernacle gave him a little garment like their own, of white linen, in which to minister before the Lord ; but "his mother, every year, apparently at the only time of their meeting, gave him a little mantle reaching down to his feet over the other dress, and such as he retained as his badge until the latest times of his life." *

* Dean Stanley.

What must the mother's thoughts have been as she sat working over that little coat! Every stitch she set, every thread she drew, was a prayer to God for her dear boy. Every time she held it up she saw a picture of her boy within its folds. Every mother who has been separated from her boy, every boy who has been separated from his mother, knows how the heart goes out in love to the absent one.

So Samuel's childhood passed, and some time after this, but while he was still a child (for the language means a young child), he was asleep in the tabernacle when he received his first call. It was in the dark night; everything was still; the priests were asleep, Eli was asleep. Samuel was by himself in the holy place, when he was awakened by a voice calling him by name. The sleep of healthy childhood is profound, not easily disturbed, but this voice could rouse any sleeper. The little lad, hearing his own name, started up quickly and said, "Here *am I*," and, naturally supposing it was Eli's voice, went to the old priest to know what he wanted. "Here *am I*; for thou calledst me." But he had to awaken him. The priest had heard no voice. "I called not," said he; "lie down again."

Twice after this did the voice call Samuel, and three times did the gentle boy go and call up the old priest with the same message. Did you ever know a boy who could be awakened three times out of a sound sleep without losing his temper and crying out angrily? I am sure I never knew a man who could bear this strain upon his temper without some sharp words of rebuke.

Samuel did not know what it meant; the old priest did not know what it meant, though now he was thoroughly aroused. The word of the Lord was precious in those days (precious because it was rare). For some time there had been

no open vision, no published utterance of a prophet. Samuel, from his extreme youth, could not know whose the voice was ; but Eli, old and feeble though he was in body and in faith, knew that it was the voice of the Lord, and he said, “Go, lie down : and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord ; for thy servant heareth.”

The voice could not have been simply a voice in a dream (it will not do to explain it in this way) ; it must have been a real voice breaking on the stillness of the night ; but now “the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak ; for thy servant heareth.”

Then came those awful words which the poor lad heard and remembered, but could hardly have understood. It was a message to Eli pronouncing the doom of his house. The voice ceased ; the boy lay still, the night passed, the morning came ; he arose, opened the doors of the tabernacle, but was afraid to tell Eli what he had heard. But the old man called him and asked him what the Lord had said, and seeing probably some reluctance in the boy to speak, he charged him most solemnly to keep back nothing. Thus adjured, the boy told him the fearful words which were enough to overwhelm him and crush him to the earth. When he had ended, the old man simply said, “It *is* the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good.”

What an affecting sight ! An old man, a priest of the Lord, bowed with the weight of years and of cares, full of grief and shame for the evil conduct of his dissolute sons, with the added horror of knowing that he might have restrained his sons and did not, standing before a little lad and hearing from his childish lips those words so distressing, so hopeless, so awful as to make the ears of all who heard them tingle !

"The contrast between the terrible doom and the gentle creature who announced it gives to this portion of the narrative a universal interest. It is this side of Samuel's career that has been so well caught in the well-known picture of Sir Joshua Reynolds."*

Again, after this in a battle with the Philistines the Hebrews were defeated, and then, to secure victory in the next battle, they proposed to take the ark of God into the field, and the two sons of Eli carried it there. But it was too late : the anger of God was against his people ; they were again overthrown, the ark was taken, the two sons of Eli were slain.

The old man their father, still the judge and the priest, sat by the side of the street waiting for news from the battle ; for he trembled for the ark of God. Perhaps he had not been willing that it should be taken to the field. Then there came from the army a swift runner, a messenger, with the news. His clothes were torn, there was earth on his head, he was covered with dust. His appearance told the story. The sad news soon spread over the city ; the crying and the noise reached old Eli. The man came to him. He told him that Israel had fled, that there had been a great slaughter, that his two sons were dead, and that the ark of God was taken. The poor old man received the news as blows, one after the other, upon his heart,—the overthrow of the troops, the terrible slaughter, the flight with the horrors of the relentless pursuit, and even the death of his two sons ; but when the last sad news came, "the ark of God is taken," he could hear no more, he could bear no more ; he fell backward off his seat by the gate, and broke his neck and died.

This is but a glimpse of the early life of Samuel ; and I have space only to say that for some twenty years biblical

* Dean Stanley.

history is silent about him, but that afterwards he became one of the greatest if not the very greatest character in Old Testament history, except Moses and David. He was a judge, which meant the chief ruler, a warrior and a prophet. When the people in their thoughtless folly grew tired of his rule, he became what the English people called Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, a king maker, for he anointed Saul to be their king.

Of the many lessons which may be drawn from this story, take two or three.

1. One is for my young readers. You see that this young child, this little boy, was useful in the Lord's house. That house in Samuel's day was only a tent, called a tabernacle, for the great temple was not yet built. The little lad was left there by his mother for two purposes ; one was for education, and the other was to serve the Lord. Really it was one and the same purpose then, though in our day we make a division of the subject. It is an interesting and affecting thought that this lad had no playfellows ; he was the only child in the house. His teacher was the old priest Eli, too old to have much sympathy with a young child. Yet the boy ministered before the Lord, and this was his religious education.

Does it ever seem to you that you have *anything* to do ; that you *can* do anything in the Lord's house ? Don't you know that every Sunday when you go to church you hear words of good counsel from those who are appointed to speak to you there ? Don't you know that you can help in the services ? Can you not by your quiet, respectful attention, by your thoughtful interest, listen to the reading of the Scriptures ? Can you not by your hearty singing of the hymns and your patient listening to the addresses, and by

your joining in the prayers, minister before the Lord in his house?

Some of the sweetest church music ever heard has been made by young people's voices in the great churches. Don't you want to make church music sweet and beautiful, as it ought to be and as you can help to make it?

2. The second lesson is for my older readers. The two sons of Eli were also brought up in the Lord's house. They had careful training, they too ministered before the Lord; but, alas! they had no heart in it. The morning and evening sacrifice, the daily service, had no meaning to them; they tired of it; they hated it. They dragged themselves to it, or they were compelled to attend it and assist at it; they were glad when it was all over and they could return to their own ways, their wicked and corrupt thoughts.

Are there any of my readers who have no interest in the Sunday church services, no interest in the daily family worship, who drag themselves to it, or who go only because they are required? If so, there is something wrong—wrong in you or defective in the character of the services.

If the fault is with you, in your want of interest or attention, see to it that you change your attitude, turn yourselves round; remember this is the service of God, and that you cannot, except at your peril, be indifferent to it or join in it with only half a heart.

If the fault is in the character of the services, they who are responsible for them ought to see to it that the services are made more appropriate and attractive.

The boy Samuel grew up to be a good man, honored of God and of man. He was humble, submissive, teachable, truthful, devoted, and pure in heart and life.

The two sons of Eli were disobedient, profane, untruthful,

hypocritical, and impure in heart and in life. They were not simply sinners, not sinners in secret, not solitary sinners, but open and unblushing sinners, even in the sanctuary ; they sinned together and with other people ; they sinned and they perished.

3. We do not know when the voice of the Lord will come to us.

Are there not boys and girls whose mothers have given them to the Lord as the mother of Samuel did her boy ? Are there not boys and girls whose parents every night kneel down and ask God to take care of their sons and daughters, and to make them good boys and good girls, so that they may grow up to be good men and women ? And do you not sometimes feel when you lie awake at night and cannot sleep, you know not why,—do you not sometimes feel that you ought to give yourselves to the Lord ? It may be that these thoughts come to you because your mother is praying for you, and the good Spirit of God comes and speaks to your heart because your mother is praying for you. Ah ! you cannot tell what good influences are about you waiting to bless you if you will only open your hearts to them.



AN EASTERN GATEWAY.

Angels of life and death alike are his ;
Without his leave they pass no threshold o'er ;
Who then would wish or dare, believing this,
Against his messengers to shut the door ?—LONGFELLOW.

How much more may we say that boys and girls are “dead”—dead in spirit, dead in the worst kind of death—if they have lost all care for God, for truth and righteousness and kindness? Like the Shunammite’s son, who was both asleep and dead, you need to be awaked; you need to be quickened into life.—SAMUEL COX.

Remember the truth which is here so touchingly impressed upon us, that we cannot tell what a day or what an hour may bring forth; that “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.”—MACDUFF.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON.

THIS is a very sad story. A young boy, a child of promise, is given to his mother as a reward for kindness shown to one of the Lord's prophets. The little lad comes, bringing light into the house and cheering and gladdening the declining years of the old father. But the lad is cut off in the very beginning of his life.

It is the harvest season. The little fellow, tired of playing about the house, gets his mother's consent to go out to the field. In all the bustle and excitement of busy men and women and children, reaping and binding into sheaves and gathering into shocks the golden grain, the child will see his father, and be taken in his arms and shown the busy scene. It is a bright, hot day; the hills are covered with rich green grass and many-colored flowers, the valleys are waving with the yellow bending grain.

Not long is the child permitted to stay and see the bustle and stir of busy men, the sharp-ringing sickles and the gathered sheaves. The hot sun beats upon him, so unused to its fierce rays. He looks up to his father with a pitiful, appealing cry, and says (what so many other children have said from that day to this), "My head, my head!" The father, thinking it is nothing serious—only a headache—says to a larger boy who seems to have had charge of the child, "Carry him to his mother."

You know, when we are sick, how we wish to be at home. And when a boy is sick, a young boy, how he wants to go to his mother! For there is nothing so tender, so soothing, so

helpful to a sick child as his mother's love ; there is no touch so delicate as hers ; there is no kiss so comforting as hers. From no other hand does he receive the bitter medicine so patiently as from her hand.

When this sick boy reaches home, his mother, seeing that he is ill, does what your mother has done to you, my reader, when you were sick : she takes him in her lap. I do not know how old he was nor how large he was ; but he was not too old nor too large for his mother to lift him from the arms of the boy who brought him home, to her own knees, where he lay suffering, burning with fever, until noon, when he died. Whether there was a physician at hand we do not know. Doubtless there were cooling draughts, and bandages for his aching head ; but the sun-stroke was fatal,—the boy died. The poor mother was almost paralyzed with grief. How sudden this was ! Full of life and joy in the morning—dead at noon ! A child of promise, a gift from the Lord, sent to brighten the house and cheer her old age, cut off at the very beginning of life.

With an instinct true to nature, the heart-broken mother takes the dead child in her arms, carries him up the short stairway to the chamber of the man of God, the prophet who had promised she should have the child. This chamber on the wall she had had made for this same man of God. She lays the child on the prophet's bed, shuts the door upon him and leaves him there.

You know the rest of the story : how she called for her husband, and in her poor distracted condition—or unwilling at once to tell him of their great loss—she asked for a young man, and one of the swift asses that she might ride to Mount Carmel with all speed to Elisha the prophet. She mounted the beast ; the young man was charged to drive rapidly ; and

no matter what might happen, he must not slacken his speed until he was bidden. You know how she would not be put off by Elisha sending his servant with his staff; how she fell at his feet in her great sorrow, and would not be put away, but could only cry out in her bitter agony, "*Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?*"

There was no need to say more; there was no need to tell the prophet the sad story of the child's short sickness and sudden death. He saw it all at a glance. He arose and followed the broken-hearted mother to her house; he ascended the stairs; he went in. His servant had gone before and laid the prophet's staff on the face of the child, but with no effect. He shut the door; no one was in the room but himself and the dead boy; he prayed to God; he stretched himself on the dead body; life returned; the blood came back into its natural channels; the child opened his eyes. The prophet called the mother; *her* faith had never wavered; she lifted her dear child again and went down into the house.

From this very beautiful but very sad story many lessons might be drawn which ought to help us to look upon life as it is, and show us what we ought to make of it. I mention only a few:

Young people may die.

Young people may die suddenly.

Young people may die though their dearest friends are beside them.

Young people may die though their friends are good and pray for them.

1. *Young people may die.* You all know this as well as I do. If you go into a grave-yard, you will see many short graves. If you read a daily paper, you will see that many of the deaths are of very young people. It has been said

that one half of the people that are born into the world die either in infancy or in early childhood. There is hardly any person who cannot remember that he has lost a young brother or sister or friend. Now if this is true—if you are as likely to die as other people—is it not worth your while to ask yourself whether you are living as you will wish you had lived when you are called away? Let me ask you, Are you living as you ought to live? I do not expect you to answer the question to me; but let each one answer it for himself. Are you living as you ought to live? You need not ask me what I mean by this question, for you know well enough what I mean. If you are doing every day what you ought not to do; if you are in the habit of saying bad words, and thinking bad thoughts, and doing bad things; if you are neglecting your prayers, and turning away from good things which are said to you,—you know very well that you are not living as you ought to live, and are not prepared to die.

2. *Young people may die suddenly.* You see how it was with this lad in the story which I have given you here. And this is not a peculiar case. You and I have heard of many as sudden deaths as this. A little child, playing in the street in summer time, tries to run across the street in front of a street car, slips on a piece of apple-skin or orange-peel which some other thoughtless child has thrown upon the pavement, falls under the horses' feet or under the wheels of the heavy car, and in a moment is crushed to death. The father, coming home in the evening from his long day's work and expecting to meet his little boy's smile, is met by a messenger who tells him that his little boy is dead—that he was dead before they could get word to his father that he was hurt. You have heard of such cases. A fire breaks out in the dead of night. The family are all sound asleep, especially

the young children. The father and mother are easily aroused. All is alarm and confusion. The young children sleep soundly, are not easily awakened ; before they can be reached, they are suffocated with smoke, and are burned to death. Or, again, some young girls are at work in a mill, in an upper story ; the cry of fire is heard ; there is a general panic ; everybody is beside himself ; the way down stairs is cut off by the flames or by the smoke ; the girls cannot be reached ; they are suffocated, and burned to death. Or, again, the diphtheria or some other deadly disease attacks a child in the night, and soon assumes a fatal character ; and in spite of all the skill of the doctor, the child dies. Now in all these cases—which are not merely imaginary cases—there is no time to prepare for death ; and if there were time, everything is most unfavorable for it. The best time is now, while you are in good health and have all your thoughts about you.

3. *Young people may die though their dearest friends are about them.* It was so in the case of the little lad whose story you have heard to-day in this chapter. He was with his father when he was taken sick. He was at once carried home to his mother. She took him on her lap. You know how tenderly she must have nursed him ; how everybody in the house must have done everything that could be done to keep off the angel of death. But it could not be ; no amount of love and care, no remedies that could be found, no medical aid within reach, was of any use whatever to save that young life. And it is so every day now. A rich man's child is taken sick ; a doctor is sent for. If he is slow in coming, another is sent for, and another, until there may be several in the room in consultation ; and all that money can do in getting medicines and other remedies is done, and all that love can do in careful nursing and kind attention from

the parents and sisters and all the friends is done, but all to no purpose : the child must die.

4. *Young people may die though their friends are good and are praying that they may get well.* It must have been so in this case. His mother was a godly woman. Her child was given to her in answer to prayer, and because she had been kind to one of the Lord's prophets ; and as the boy lay on her lap that hot day in summer, she must have cried to God to have mercy on the child and to spare his life, that he might live to be a good man and prove a blessing to his parents. And she must have prayed that God would spare her too, the poor mother, and save her from the great sorrow of losing her little boy. And is it not so now ? There is many a sick child to-day—ay, at this hour, while you are reading this page. There are many Christian mothers and fathers who are kneeling around little cribs where young children are struggling with spasms, or panting with fever, or choking with some disease of the throat ; and friends, other friends, are all praying together and with these parents that God would have mercy and spare young lives. It seems very hard that children should die. So young, so helpless—children so young that they have hardly ever been out of their mothers' arms, so young that they do not know their right hand from their left—why should they die ? Ah, we do not know, we cannot tell ; but we know that it is so, for we read and hear of them almost every day. Many a rich man would give everything he has in the world if he could only save the life of his dear little child ; but no money, no prayers, can keep off the angel of death when once his cold hand is laid upon the heart. And if God should send his angel for you, reader, you may be sure that no matter how many friends are about you, and no matter how good they

are and how much they pray for you, they cannot save you. Is it not well then, now while you have life and health, to see to it that you do what you can do to live so that whenever you are called, you may not be found living in sin?

None of us can tell when our last day shall come, or what will be the circumstances which will surround us at that dread hour. We do not know whether we shall be surprised by the sudden and unexpected coming of the angel of death, or whether we shall have the warning of lingering and wasting sickness, for that last change. We do not know whether we shall die in the presence of the nearest and dearest of our friends, and with such alleviations as sympathetic affection can bring to us, or whether we shall meet the last great enemy among strangers or in a public hospital. We do not know whether we shall die on the land or at sea, by violence or by the ordinary visitation of nature; nor is it very important that we should know anything at all about that. But it is important—it is of the utmost importance—that we should be always prepared. And I ask you not to delay this preparation. You need not retire from the world, nor from the society of those whom you love best, in order to make this preparation. You need not withdraw from nor abate your interest in any lawful occupation, unless you are too much absorbed in it now. You may go about your daily duties as usual, doing right and only right in your lawful callings; but see to it that your heart is right in the sight of God; see to it that you are living in daily communion with him; see to it that you love his word, that you love his people, that you love his day; see to it that you are at peace with each other and all others everywhere; that you are not living to yourself, but are trying to be good and to do good, and thus show your love to God who is the Father of all, and to Jesus

Christ the Saviour of all who believe; and then it will matter but little to you, comparatively, whether you die at home in the midst of your household, or whether violence overtake you leaving you no time to think, or even to offer a prayer.

But you must be a real Christian, not a mere professor of religion—not a member of the church merely. You must feel that you belong to Christ; that you are not your own, but are bought with a price. You must feel that you have enlisted under the banner of Christ as a soldier, and have henceforth no will but his. If he leads you through great trials and sufferings, you must not hesitate nor repine, nor think it hard. If your life is to be a series of struggles and afflictions, you must remember it is he who appoints them. If he leads you even to martyrdom, as he did Stephen, you must be willing to go and die.

How can I better close this chapter than by giving you this beautiful hymn?—

The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar:
Who follows in his train?
Who best can drink his cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain?
“Who patient bears his cross below,
He follows in his train.”

The martyr first, whose eagle eye
Could pierce beyond the grave,
Who saw his Master in the sky
And called on him to save;
Like him with pardon on his tongue
In midst of mortal pain,
He prayed for them that did the wrong:
Who follows in his train?

A glorious band, the chosen few
On whom the Spirit came,
Twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew,
And mocked the cross and flame.
They met the tyrant's brandished steel,
The lion's gory mane;
They bowed their necks the death to feel:
Who follows in their train?

A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed.
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil and pain:
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train!



In secret love the Master
To each one whispers low,
“I am at hand,—work faster;
Behold the sunset glow!”—BARBARA MILLER.

One by one thy duties wait thee:
Let thy whole strength go to each;
Let no future dreams elate thee,—
Learn thou first what these can teach.

—ADELAIDE A. PROCTER.

The latest gospel in this world is, know thy work and do it. Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual. Know what thou canst work at, and work at it like Hercules.—THOMAS CARLYLE.

I saw the Lord of life bending over his bench, fashioning some lowly utensil for some housewife of Nazareth. And he would receive payment for it, too; for he at least could see no disgrace in the order of things that his Father had appointed.—MACDONALD.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CARPENTER.

AFTER our Lord's encounter with the demoniac on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, from whom he cast out the devils, and his return in the fisherman's boat to the western shore of the lake; and after the healing of the woman who had had a wasting disease many years, and raising from the dead the daughter of Jairus, a girl twelve years of age,—our Lord turned his steps toward that part of the country where he had been brought up, in which lay the city of Nazareth.

On the Sabbath he went into the synagogue, and, as his custom was, began to teach. How vividly do we recall another visit to this same synagogue and the sermon he preached there, when the people rose up and seized him and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, and would have cast him down headlong if he had not delivered himself from their dreadful purpose!

What our Lord said in the synagogue on this Sabbath we do not know. Probably he had time to say very little (his words are not recorded), for the people seem to have interrupted him by saying, “From whence hath this *man* these things? [that is, the things he was saying] and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?”

They had heard of the wonderful works; some of his hearers must have seen the healing of the sick woman. If they did not see the raising of the daughter of Jairus, they must have heard of it immediately. Some of them must

have heard of the man out of whom the legion of devils was cast, and who went home to preach Christ to his friends; and they were amazed that one whom they had known from his childhood without seeing anything very remarkable about him could have this divine wisdom and could do such wonderful works; so they broke out in that question which was answered in the asking: "Is not this the carpenter?"

Yes, it is the carpenter. It may be a most unpleasant conviction to you men of Nazareth, you rulers of the synagogue, you men of the world; you men who bind heavy burdens on other men's shoulders, and touch them not to lighten them even by as much as a little finger can lift; you men, rich, proud, haughty, who live upon the labor of other people. You may not like to think it, but this man who says these wonderful words, who does these wonderful works, is the carpenter. You have known him all his life, until he left home lately; you know his mother; you know him who was called his father. *He is indeed the carpenter.*

"And they were offended at him," or rather offended *in* him. They could not or would not understand him. From the time when the Lord Jesus returned from Jerusalem, where he had gone with his parents at twelve years of age, to the time when he entered upon his public ministry, as he "began to be about thirty years of age," we know certainly very little about him. It is a period of eighteen years,—a very large part of his short life on earth. We know, indeed, that he was subject unto his parents, for so we are told in the gospel. But in what did his subjection consist? What was he doing all these years?

No doubt he went to school some years after the return from the holy city on that memorable occasion. We like to ask questions that cannot be answered now, such as, What

kind of a school did he attend? Who was his teacher? What subjects did he study? Who were his schoolmates? Where and what kind of a place was the school-house? How long did he continue as a school-boy? So far as we know, his school-life was like that of boys of his own age and station in the city of Nazareth. Except that he never did anything wrong, that his life was pure and holy, there is no reason to suppose that there was anything very striking or peculiar in his boy-life at school.

But when he grew in years and strength he must have left school and gone into the workshop of Joseph the carpenter; for it was time now for him to set about the learning of a trade, as was the custom of Jewish boys at that day, and there was a common saying that “a Jew who did not have his son taught a trade did, in effect, teach him to be a thief.” As the young man was to learn a trade, where could he so well learn as in the shop of his reputed father, Joseph? and what trade so suitable as that which Joseph worked at, the carpenter’s trade?

A carpenter’s shop in those far-off days must have been very different from one in our times. A modern English artist, Mr. Holman Hunt, has given us an interior view of a carpenter’s shop at Nazareth. It is a view, of course, of one in our own times, such as he saw; but the customs have changed so little in those eastern countries that with some allowance for the much greater number of tools now in use and their finer finish, we may easily imagine what the shop looked like in which our Lord worked as a young learner at the trade of a carpenter. There must have been a work-bench, and saws and axes and hammers, and tools to bore holes with, and measuring-lines or rods, a square, a line and plummet, planes and drawing-knives, and the more simple

tools indispensable at that day, as now, in a carpenter's shop. There were chests in which the tools were packed when carried from place to place; and when not packed in chests, the various tools were hung on nails or pegs on the walls, so that everything might be in its own place, and so that it could be found even in the dark.

It is interesting to think that the work of these carpenters was not all done in their shop. They must have gone here and there as their services were needed. If repairs were needed or if a new house were to be built, they must go to the place, wherever it was, carrying their box of tools, as carpenters and builders do now. Think also of the workers at other trades, the other mechanics, the stone-masons, the plasterers, the workers in iron. What acquaintances and friendships must have been formed! How would these men, these day-laborers, regard the young carpenter? We need be in no doubt about this, for the gospel tells us that as Jesus increased in stature—that is, as he grew upward to manhood—he “increased in favor with God and *man*.”

There is a tradition, which is not improbable, that before our Lord began his public ministry, and while yet at work as a carpenter, Joseph died, and that the care of his mother fell upon her son. She was poor; Joseph was poor; and daily labor was necessary to sustain the family. At one time the people asked, “Is not this the carpenter's *son*? ” again they ask, “Is not this the carpenter?”

If he then became the head of the family and the master of the shop, it would be necessary for him to buy materials for building, to go here and there where lumber was sold, even to distant cities, perhaps to Tyre on the sea-coast. How many people would he meet in the markets where materials were sold! how just and true he must have been in his pur-

chases and in his payments ! There was no taking advantage of the ignorance of him with whom he was dealing ; no promising to do anything without the intention of performing ; no sharp practice.

And think of his daily work ! It was hard work. The carpenter has not an easy life. It is constant toil from morning till evening, day after day, out of doors in fair weather, and often with exposure of life, and in doors in dust and the litter of the shop when the weather is wet and stormy. Think of our Lord doing this day after day and year after year, probably for a large part of the eighteen years in which we have no record of his life !

It is very strange. It certainly brings us much nearer the Son of God to know that he lived in our world ; that he was the son of her who was blessed above all women ; that he lived a life of purity, of poverty, of labor, before he began to say the wonderful words and do the wonderful things which led the people of his own town to ask, “ Is not this the carpenter ? ”

It interests us to think that our Lord had other work to do besides building and repairing houses. All the furniture of the dwellings was made by carpenters ; and the ploughs and other farming tools also, simple as they were, came from the carpenter’s shop. Yokes for oxen were probably made by this young carpenter ; and we may be sure that as his sacred hands fashioned the heavy wood and formed it into curves to fit the neck, he smoothed the rough surface so that it should be as easy as possible to the dumb creatures ; and his gracious words, “ Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light ”—these words have a tender and touch-

ing meaning when we remember that his own hands may have fashioned the yoke for the patient and faithful ox.

How good it is to think that in all *little* things he was faithful; that in toil and service he rendered to all their dues, never slighting his work, never failing to pay his debts; that he must have been kind and helpful and sympathizing to his neighbors, or he would not have grown in their favor; that he went about doing good; that if any one trespassed against him, he must have striven to be reconciled to his brother! No Lazarus lay uncared for at his gate; no robbed and wounded and helpless traveller lay by the roadside neglected and passed by by him.

It is very good to know that when the Sabbath came he was at his place in the synagogue. He did not say that he was too tired with his week's work to go to worship with the people of God. He did not feel that it was all very well for rich people and well-to-do people to keep the Sabbath, but that as he was a laboring man, a mechanic, he needed the Sabbath for rest, and would not go to church or to the synagogue. And it is good to know that, toiling and working man as he was, he could take time from his exacting labor and spend days at a time to go up to Jerusalem to the great annual feasts.

One of the evils of high civilization, or culture as it is called, is the idea that work is degrading; that while to work with the mind, the brain, is dignified and elevating, manual labor—labor with the hands—is degrading. And men strive to get rich so as to place their children above the necessity of working with their hands for a support; and while our high-schools are filled with the sons and daughters of persons who work with their hands for their daily bread and to support and educate their children, very many of

these sons and daughters, when educated, are unwilling to work with their hands, but seek some other, and as they foolishly think more honorable, means of living; and the consequence is that the learned professions, so called, are crowded with persons seeking a pecuniary and not always honest living. Almost every day I am called on or written to by young men of good education who are seeking situations in banks or railroad companies or insurance companies; anywhere else than in carpenter shops, in machine shops or on farms.

We love to think of the apostle Paul as a worker with his hands—as a mechanic, a tent-maker. No doubt he did his work well, even if he made the small, rude tents that were sold to ordinary travellers, merchants, peddlers and pilgrims. And it requires no great stretch of imagination to suppose that he might sometimes have been in want, even in want of work; and, as another has written, that while Aquila the Jew and Priscilla his wife, themselves tent-makers, though people of substance, were living in exile in Corinth and supporting themselves by their trade, there may have stood at their door one day a little man “with weak eyes and of feeble presence, who said that he too was a Jew and a tent-maker and wanted work.”* Did Paul think that it was degrading to be a mechanic, educated as he was? No; he preached in the day time to all who would listen to him, and at night worked with his hands in the house of the friends who had sheltered him. Did our Lord think he was degraded by being a mechanic? No; he was rich, but for our sakes he became poor that we through his poverty might become rich. He had all power; the silver and the gold were his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; but for fifteen or eighteen years, probably, he worked in a carpenter’s shop.

* Samuel Cox.

I do not know whether any of my readers wish to become carpenters. It matters little, perhaps, what trade you learn, provided you are determined to support yourself by honest labor. The apostle Paul once held up his toil-worn hands and said to his friends, "Ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me"—showing clearly that he had supported himself and those that were dependent upon him. But if any of you should become carpenters, you may have the great satisfaction of knowing that you are, in this respect at least, following the example of our blessed Lord.

The artist I referred to just now, painted another picture. It is the interior of the shop in which Jesus worked. It is, of course, imaginary. The mother of Jesus is bending over a chest in which are kept the rich vases which the Magi, the three wise men, brought to the infant Jesus at Bethlehem. Her young son, not yet fully grown, is standing in the open door, that looks toward the west. The sun is setting, and the long day's work is done. The young carpenter is stretching out his arms in weariness, and the sun makes a shadow from the figure, on the floor, in the form of a cross. His mother raises her head and sees that fatal shadow, and her heart is pierced as with a sword, as was foretold by old Simeon.

I close with the words of another*: "Character makes the man ; and there is no character so strong and so beautiful as that which is based upon a real personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is not jewelled fingers, nor smart clothing, nor aristocratic airs, that entitle one to what Tennyson calls

The grand old name of gentleman,
Defamed by every charlatan,
And soiled with all ignoble use.

* I. T. Davidson, D.D.

Get a living grasp of Christ; rely on his merits, breathe his spirit, walk in his steps; and whether, like Nehemiah, you are cup-bearer to the king, or like Paul stitching canvas in a back shop in Corinth, you will be able to command the respect of all, will live beloved and will die lamented. Only give yourselves fearlessly to the task which God has set before you, and

With a heart for any fate,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait."



NAZARETH.

Now in the darkness flame his eyes who saw
Through all thy virtues that undreamed-of flaw,
And the calm voice thou never canst forget
Tells in the silence what thou lackest yet.

—GEORGE ALEXANDER CHADWICK.

Of good they choose the least,
Despise that which is best—
The joyful, heavenly feast

Which Christ would give them.—RICHARD BAXTER.

Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to thy breast.—GEORGE HERBERT.

Whoever has an ideal and is making no struggle toward it, is sinking
into the outer darkness.—GEORGE MACDONALD.

CHAPTER X.

THE YOUNG RULER.

THERE must have been a good reason why this particular incident was recorded by three of the sacred writers; and the reason is, I think, not far to seek. It is a most important incident. The question asked of our Lord by this young man is the most important question that can possibly be asked by any human being, be he high or low, rich or poor, old or young. It seems then that these three writers of the gospels, no one of whom relates all that our Lord did and said, all thought that this history at least should not be left out.

It is the story of a young man who was rich and belonged to the ruling class, and who in some way or other had become convinced that he was a sinner and needed salvation. We naturally inquire who he was, what was his name, where he lived and how he came to be interested in serious things, and why he went to the Lord Jesus for instruction. Very little, however, is known about him. We do not know his name nor the name of his parents, nor where he lived, nor where he was educated, nor what was his chief purpose in life, nor who were his companions, nor what became of him after this interview with our Lord. In short, we only know that he was young, that he was rich, that he was a ruler, and that he was anxious about his soul. These, however, are all most interesting facts. They would be very interesting facts concerning any one in our own time.

It seems, then, that as Jesus went forth, probably from some house where he had spent the night, he was met in the

way by a young man, well dressed, probably, and of good condition, who came running to him, and kneeled to him, and, looking up into his face, asked him what he should do that he might have eternal life.

To us this seems a very abrupt and even startling question, and kneeling to any one in a public place would be most extraordinary in our time; but in the Holy Land, where this occurred, neither the question nor the prostration of the young man would seem very strange. The first words the young man uttered, the very reverent tones of his voice, the "Good Master, what shall I do"—these showed what a state of mind he was in. The answer Jesus gave was itself a question: "Why callest thou me good?" Then presently he adds, "but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments"; and in answer to the young man's question, "Which?"—that is, which of the commandments—he gives a list of them, thus:

Thou shalt do no murder ;
Thou shalt not commit adultery ;
Thou shalt not steal ;
Thou shalt not bear false witness ;
Defraud not ;
Honor thy father and thy mother ;
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

And the young man answered, "All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Jesus, looking down into that face that was turned up to him, regarding him with the deepest interest, and loving him, answered, "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, . . . and come, follow me."

A plain question, and apparently an earnest and honest one; and a plain, direct, simple answer. There was no mis-

take about the young man's meaning in the question ; there was no mistaking the meaning of the Saviour's answer.

What was the result of this interview, this question and answer ? So far as the young man was concerned, and so far as we know from the Scriptures, no good came to him : for the terms were not to his taste ; they were too severe ; it would cost him too much ; he was saddened, he was disappointed ; he did not accept the offer of eternal life, though made by the Son of God himself. He turned away ; and so far as we know, this was the turning-point in his life, and at present he turned the wrong way.

But the lesson of the incident is not lost to the world. It has been made the text for many a discourse, many an exhortation, many an appeal to follow Jesus ; and I ask you now to look a little closer into the circumstances and see if we can find anything that may be useful to us.

There are so many encouraging things in the history of this interview between the young man and our Lord that we wonder he did not give up all and follow him.

1. *He was young.* Unfortunately it is not common for young men or boys to desire to know Jesus. They seem to think that they can do without him, that his friendship will not make them happy, that if they follow him they will not be able to do or say or think the things they love to do and say and think ; and so they do not care to go near him, much less to follow him. And they think that even if they must at some time or other seek him and follow him in order to have eternal life, there will be time enough for all that hereafter. There is a long life to live (no one thinks that he himself will die young) ; there is plenty of time, they say ; there is no danger, and it will be easier after a while than it is now.

2. *He came running.* He was in haste. Why? Would not Jesus come along that way again? Would there not be other opportunities? Instead of running to Jesus, might he not wait until Jesus came along his way? Why should this young man make himself so forward as to set out running to meet Jesus, when by waiting he might meet him incidentally at some Pharisee's house, or walking in the highway? But you see his earnestness. • He was too much in earnest to think of appearances. It might set people to staring at him as he ran; it was not dignified for a ruler; but what did he care for that? He was too much interested to think or to care for what other people said about his haste. It seemed now or never to him. This might be the only opportunity he would ever have to speak with Jesus, and should he let him pass by without speaking to him?

3. *He kneeled.* This shows his great respect. It is not certain that the young man meant to offer divine worship to the Lord. While he believed him to be a great prophet who could work miracles, he might not have supposed him to be divine in the sense that it was proper to worship him. But certainly he had the highest respect for our Lord; he looked up to him as a great teacher. He might have heard, before, many words from those lips; he might have seen some of those wonderful works. He had faith enough to know that Jesus could answer his great question, and he ran and fell down on his knees before him and said, "Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

4. *He came as a disciple.* He was willing to learn. Rich and powerful though he might be, a ruler of the synagogue, yet he was willing to be taught; he wanted to be a learner. It is not often that one who is young and rich and in high position is willing to be taught. Such persons generally

think that they know enough already. They are not willing to admit that they are ignorant of anything worth knowing ; and when we find a young person, either man or woman, of high position or wealth who is willing to ask questions for the sake of learning from those who are older and more experienced, it is a most hopeful and attractive feature.

The wisest men have very much to learn if they are only teachable ; and those who know the most are sometimes most eager for more knowledge ; but these are not common qualities. Most people think that they know enough already. Here was a man, however, probably well educated, certainly rich and influential, who was not only willing but anxious to go to a stranger who claimed to be a teacher and ask him the greatest, the most interesting, the most important of all questions. It was one young man asking another young man a great question ; for Jesus was most probably about his own age.

5. *He came apparently willing to obey.* There was nothing insincere in him. It was not curiosity to hear what a famous teacher would say when spoken to in this abrupt way. He did not wish to put hard questions to him and perplex or vex him, as the Pharisees vainly tried to do. He came supposing in his own heart that he was willing to do anything that might be required of him. When Saul was converted, on his way to Damascus, his first question was, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?” When the jailer at Philippi was awakened at midnight by the earthquake, and when a not less great convulsion in his soul showed him that he was a great sinner, he fell down before Paul and Silas and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?”

But, alas, this young man, though apparently willing to obey, was found to be not willing. He was self-deceived ; he did not understand himself.

6. *But he came to the right teacher.* He might have gone to the Pharisees (probably he had gone to them) or to the Sadducees, or to other leaders of thought, and teachers, among the Jews, and they would have told him that he was already in the way of eternal life, that he need not give himself any trouble about the matter; as he was a true son of Abraham, he was already a member of the church, he could keep the law outwardly as he had done, and that he could live on as other men were living, keeping clear of outward and gross sins, enjoying his riches, living a life of pleasure, eating, drinking, making merry; and then—so the Pharisees would have said—he would die, and the angels would carry him to Abraham's bosom. Ah, he knew all this, he had heard it before, he did not believe it; his yearning, anxious soul could not be fed on such chaff. Miserable teachers are ye all, he might have said; I do not want your help. You need not tell me about your creeds, your washings, your ceremonies. These are only outward. I want something to touch and affect my heart. And so he went to Jesus, and he made no mistake in this; he went to the right teacher.

7. *He came on the right errand, and on the great errand.* He did not ask how he could be made learned and great, how he could increase his possessions, which were already great. He did not ask how those great miracles were performed which he had seen or of which he had heard. He did not ask for a high place in the new kingdom which some thought our Lord had come to set up. A foolish mother once asked this for her two sons; but this young man came on a far different errand: he came seeking salvation of him who came as a Saviour.

8. *He felt that everything depended on himself.* And this, perhaps, was the most hopeful, the most encouraging, of all

these circumstances. He might have sent a messenger; others did so who wanted help from Jesus. He might have stated his case to one of his disciples, and asked his good offices in obtaining the instruction he needed. But this young man, feeling that everything depended upon himself, that Jesus, and he only, could tell him what to do, that this was the time for him to act, that it might be now or never for him, runs to our Lord; he falls on his knees before him; he looks up into his face; he breaks out in the piteous cry, "Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

Now you would say that under all these favorable conditions the young man would surely find what he sought; that he was ready to do whatever he was told; that as soon as the way to eternal life was made plain to him he would set out and walk in it, and that all he needed was proper instruction.

What was the result? After hearing our Lord recite the commandments—those which relate to men's duty to each other—he replied very promptly and with much confidence, "All these . . . have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Then came the test: "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

How did he receive this answer? Did he say, Yea, Lord, I will obey thy word; I will do the thing thou requirest, which I have asked thee to tell me; I will give up everything for thee. My great possessions, myself, I give to thee. Do with me, with my property, what thou wilt; only let me be thy follower, thy disciple? Alas, no; nothing of the kind. He made no answer at all—not a word; but his eyes, that had been lifted up in such cagerness, dropped.

The test was too severe; the terms of salvation were too costly. He rose from his knees, he was sad, he turned away; he turned his back on his Lord, and he is no more heard of; he drops out of history. Whether he ever reconsidered his decision we do not know. I would hope, however, that one who was so amiable, so good outwardly, who was so well instructed, and whom Jesus loved, did, at some time or other, turn again to his Lord with a true conversion.

But see what he might have been. If he had followed the advice he asked, if he had obeyed his Lord, if he had given himself to the service of Christ then and there, what a different history it might have been! He would surely have been a disciple. He might have been near to our Lord during the rest of his life on earth, and heard all his conversations and his discourses. He might even have been an apostle, and after the crucifixion of the Lord have been sent out as Peter and Paul and others were to preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles. Then there would have been no doubt whatever as to the question, what effect the words of Christ had upon him on that memorable day when he kneeled before him.

What effect shall these words have upon you? I do not suppose (I wish I could) that there are many of you who are asking the question in your hearts, "What shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

It is true that you are in the presence of Christ. He is looking down into your hearts; he sees every thought there. Ah, how ashamed we should be if we could see the thoughts in each others' hearts! How we should shudder if our thoughts should suddenly appear written on the walls so that all could read them! But he sees them all, he knows them all; and is it not a wonder that he does not punish us for our evil thoughts? Would not you, reader, like to ask

the question “What shall I do to be saved?” Are you not thoughtful enough to ask it? I believe that you would like to know, if you could, without asking it; because at some time you must know, or you cannot be saved. Why not ask it now? Do you think there is time enough,—that you are young, and that there will be other times, and many times, when you can as well ask it as now? and so you say, What is the use of being in a hurry?

One Sunday afternoon a boy whom I knew went to the hospital with a pain in his head. At half-past six o’clock the next morning he was dead. Had he plenty of time?

One evening a young man, the son of a man whom I well knew, about twenty-one years old, went to his bed not specially unwell; and when his father went to awaken him the next morning, he was dead. Had he plenty of time?

I tell you there is not plenty of time. You do not know when your last opportunity may come. It may be to some reader now. God grant that you may have other opportunities! but you do not know that you will; no one knows it. Some will have undoubtedly, but no one can say for himself that he will. If there is anything in your life that will justify you for being in haste, it is this. You cannot afford to put it off.

The young man who came to Christ had his question answered; and so you may have yours answered if you will only ask it, even in your hearts.

You may not be required to give up great possessions, even if you have them. You are not asked to come out from your companions, your schoolmates, and follow a teacher who goes up and down the land from city to city, and who has no home. You are only asked to do one thing—believe in Christ. Now does this seem very hard? But you must believe in him with

all your heart, not with half a heart as the rich young man did ; and, believing in him with all your heart, you will give up your sins, and he will forgive them and blot them all out.

What will happen if you do not believe ? Why, of some of you something like this may be said in the future :—They went to good schools ; they were well instructed in useful things ; they were kindly treated ; but when they left school they cared for none of these things ; they fell into bad company, they went to drinking-saloons and worse places, they went from bad to worse ; some found their way to the alms-house, some to prison, and some stumbled over the dark mountains and were lost.

Then see what you will become if you believe. You will be in the highest and best sense a child of God. All your life in this world will be guarded and helped by him. All things that are best for you will be given to you. You will be made honorable and useful. You will be helping in many ways to carry on the work of God among your companions. Many of you—most of you—will become heads of families. You will have bright and happy homes of your own. You will be respected by all good people. You will be kind and gentle, thoughtful and happy ; and though you will have many trials and sorrows, you will know that they are permitted by your heavenly Father for your good and for the good of others.

You may be chosen as his messenger, in ways which he will appoint, to teach ignorant people his great salvation. In all your life the great, the infinite God will be your Friend, your Father ; and then after this life you will be taken to heaven to be “forever with the Lord.” Is not this worth living for ? And you can have it—all of you, every one of you—by simply accepting it, by believing in Christ.

She sat and wept, and with her untressed hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blest to touch ;
And he wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.
I am a sinner full of doubts and fears :
Make me a humble thing of love and tears.

—HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

I charge thee live !—repent and pray,
In dust thine infamy deplore ;
There yet is mercy—go thy way,
And sin no more.—JAMES MONTGOMERY.

Thou the sinful woman savedst,
Thou the dying thief forgavest ;
And to me a hope vouchsafest !

—THOMAS DE CELANO.
Trans. WM. J. IRONS.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER.

IN the Gospel according to Luke (chapter 7) is one of the most tender and touching and beautiful of all the narratives of the Holy Scriptures. When the great Gregory, one of the Fathers of the church, was asked to preach on it, he said, "I had rather weep over it than preach on it." I cannot preach on it; but I want to explain and dwell upon some of the points of the story, and try to interest you in it so that you may study it for yourselves; and possibly you may weep over it.

The scene is in a dwelling-house somewhere in the land of Judæa. It is probably the house of a rich man, able to give entertainment to a number of guests. No doubt everything proper to have on such occasions was provided in abundance.

All that we know of the master of the house is that he was a Pharisee, and that his name was Simon; but this does not give us much information, for Simon was a very common name among the people, and the Pharisees were one of the two most numerous of the sects among the Jews. We know, indeed, that the Pharisees were a proud, haughty and hypocritical people as a class, and that they looked with contempt and scorn on Jesus and the new religion, and we wonder why such a man should have invited our Lord to his house. It may have been curiosity to see a little more closely and hear more particularly the new prophet who was exciting so much interest among the people; it may have been to try to entangle him in his talk, as the Pharisees vainly tried to do on other occasions.

Simon had invited other guests to meet Jesus at this dinner party or supper party ; we do not know how many, nor do we know their names. They were probably people of distinction ; and as the custom was in those days, they were probably met at the door with servants bearing water to wash their dusty feet, with the kiss of welcome from the master, and with perfume for the hair.

The table was set, not as we set tables, surrounded with chairs, but with something like lounges or settees on which the guests reclined, usually on the left arm. The dishes were handed by servants ; and instead of knives and forks to eat with, as we have, the guests helped themselves by taking from the dishes with the right hand such things as they needed.

We may suppose the guests were all in their proper places at the table, our Lord being probably not far from the master of the house, and everything going on as usual on such occasions, when there came in quietly an uninvited guest. It was a woman, and such a woman as Simon would hardly have invited. She was not a lady, not one in high position, probably not well dressed, and very likely not known to any one at that table. But there was something in her dress or manner or her general appearance which betrayed her character ; and when that was known, almost every person in that room would have shrunk from her.

What had she come for ? To dine ? No ; she was not invited with that company. Had she come to pay her respects to Simon ? The proud Pharisee would not have allowed her to speak to him even in the street. How had she managed to pass the servants and get into the house ? We do not know. Possibly she glided in humbly and escaped their notice. Had she come to see Jesus ? Yes.

And what for? Could she hope to have conversation with him there? Did she think she could interrupt the company and break in upon them, and hear the gracious words that might fall from the lips of Christ? Did she hope that she might be permitted to sit at his feet, as Mary did at Bethany, and listen to the divine Teacher? Was it mere curiosity to see a distinguished prophet? Did she come in to ask a favor for herself or for some friend, as his disciples often did? Did she come in to wash his feet? No; else she would have brought water and a towel. What did she come for? It may be that she said within her heart, as another woman did, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be healed. She brought with her an alabaster flask of ointment to anoint his feet. Another woman, on another occasion, came with ointment of spikenard and poured it upon his head as he sat at meat; but this woman came to anoint his feet.

She crept up quietly, gently, as we may suppose, to that side of the couch or lounge where his feet were exposed as he reclined at the feast; and seeing that those feet had not been washed from the dust of travel, as was the custom—that the master of the house had failed in this simple act of courtesy and hospitality to his humble guest, not deeming Jesus worthy of this slight attention—the woman, seeing the soiled condition of those gracious feet, wept over them her woman's tears; and then, remembering her own life of sorrow and shame, her stained and polluted character, and her nearness to him who could heal the soul as well as the body, she poured out her tears in streams upon his neglected and travel-worn feet.

It was not the ordinary shedding of tears, whether of sorrow or of joy; it was not the ordinary overflow of the fount-

ains of grief or sympathy ; but there was something that so overwhelmed her, so bowed and crushed her to the earth, in the presence of the Saviour, that she bent over his blessed feet, clasping them with her hands, kissing them much with her lips, pouring out floods of tears upon them, bathing them, and using her unbound and flowing hair to dry them. It is a picture which the world had never seen before—which the world has never seen since. “ Her eyes, which once longed after earthly joys, now shed forth penitential tears ; her hair, which she once displayed for idle ornament, is now used to wipe the feet of Christ ; her lips, which once uttered vain things, now kiss those holy feet ; the costly ointment with which she once anointed her own person is now offered to anoint the feet of Jesus.”

I wish it were in my power to describe this scene so vividly that you could see it as if it were enacted before your eyes. The old master and the artists of our own time have done all that human genius can conceive to illustrate this most wonderful scene ; but nothing except a profound and personal interest can enable any one to appreciate it even in part. Two things we may understand as being certainly in the mind of this woman : (1) a deep and overwhelming sense of her own sinfulness ; and (2) a full assurance in the ability and willingness of Christ to save her.

What was there in her life which could properly fill her with such excessive grief ? Ah ! the answer is in one word : she had been a sinner ; and the word in this connection means more than it does generally. She had fallen into the most degrading of all sins—the sin of impurity, unchastity. It is the sin which more than all others hardens the heart, stifles the conscience, deadens the emotions, chills the sensibilities, and drives the natural blush of modesty from the cheek.

Other sins may be practiced and concealed successfully for a long time; but this sin leaves its mark in the eye, on the cheek, on the whole life, and it is next to impossible long to hide it.

Such a life of sin and shame this woman had led in that city. Who can tell how low she had fallen? Who can tell how many she had dragged down with her into that dreadful abyss of wretchedness and misery? Was there no one to warn her? Was there no one to pity her and stretch out the hand to rescue her? Oh, is it possible that in that city there was not one to say a kind word to dissuade the poor girl from so ruinous and deplorable a fate? Had she no mother? Had she never been taught to pray? Had she never heard of the mercy of God the infinite Father? It is easy enough to ask such questions, and they come naturally to our lips when we read this sad story; but we cannot answer them, and we shall never know anything more of the history of this poor unfortunate and sinful one until we meet her, if we ever shall meet her, in her home in heaven. For whether we reach heaven or not, we are sure she is there. We know that her life had been a lost and abandoned life, and that she had been known wherever she went as a sinner. What had led her to reflection? What had come over her to induce her to change her course? Something had touched her heart and convinced her that her life was wasted and blasted, that she was the object of scorn and contempt, that men pointed the finger at her as she passed along the streets, and the good, the pure, turned away with loathing. Something, I say, had opened her eyes to her sad condition—had shown her what a wicked and bitter life she had been leading, separated from all the good and the true and keeping company with the wicked, the profane, the lost—and she

determined to seek a better life. She had heard of Jesus, of his sympathy with the poor, the weak, the sinful. It is quite possible that she may have been within the sound of his voice when he said those sweet and tender words, "Come unto me, all *ye* that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And so, heavy laden with the burden of her sins, weary with the sad and wretched life she had been leading, sick at heart at the sad prospect of a future without light or hope, she came to the great Healer and bowed over his feet, kissing them again and again and bathing them with her tears of shame and sorrow.

And then she must have had a full assurance of the ability and willingness of Christ to save her. How she came to have this assurance we do not know. Certainly the Holy Spirit had touched her heart and led her to believe this fully and cordially—for no such change can come to the heart without his gracious help—but what the means were by which she was moved, we do not know. Had she met with others who had been saved by the grace of Christ? Had she seen any of his wonderful miracles, his healing the sick, his unstopping the ears of the deaf, his opening the eyes of the blind, his raising the dead to life again? All that we know is that she fully believed that Christ was able to save her, and that he was willing to save her, and that she desired to be saved. This was her faith, and this led Jesus to say to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

We never hear of her afterwards. Whether she lived long after this, or whether her life was shortened in consequence of her sins, we do not know, for the Scriptures are silent. I do not doubt for a moment, however, that if she lived for many years her life was true and upright and religious, that she never relapsed into her old ways, and that for eighteen

hundred years, as we count time, she has been a saint in heaven, having her robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and singing his praises, and seeing him face to face.

All of us are sinners in the sight of God, though not in the sense in which this woman was a sinner. We have all in some way or other, and some of us in many ways, broken the laws of God, and we deserve to be punished. We have not all sinned in the same degree, for some of us have sinned against more light than others. Some of us have been in Christian families, and have had mothers and fathers who have prayed for us and have taught us to pray. Others have been Sunday-school scholars, and have been reading and studying the Bible under highly-favorable circumstances; while there are some among us who have been brought up in families surrounded by ignorance and vice, and who have been familiar with bad associates and bad words and bad deeds from our infancy. You can see then that there is a difference in our degrees of guilt. Some of us may have hardly ever heard of Jesus Christ and his salvation, while others have known all this from our earliest years.

But we are all sinners and we all need a Saviour; and we can all find the Saviour if we seek him. You need not look for him in the houses of the rich only. He is oftener to be found in the houses of the poor. He does not pass along our streets, as he did in the streets of Jerusalem and other cities, with throngs of people following him. You need not seek him at night and secretly, as Nicodemus did for fear of the Jews. There is no one to be afraid of, and you need not be ashamed to go to him. If you should hear that he was being entertained in the house of a proud and rich man, you may be assured that he can and will come to your house just as well. He is everywhere, at all times; but you will not

see him, and you cannot know that he is present unless you are seeking him. You need not be afraid that he will repulse you ; he never did repulse any. Some of his disciples, in their ignorance and folly, will repulse you and drive you from his presence if they can : they did so in those early days, and will do so now sometimes ; but he never turned any away, he never spoke harshly to any poor trembling one.

Now if any of you feel that you have been doing very wicked things, if you have had thoughts which you dared not speak out, if you have spoken words which you would not have your best friends hear, if you have done things which now make you sad to think of, or if it sometimes seems to you that some people will not forget nor forgive you, and you fear that it will be hard work for you to live in the world and do right,—if it seems that all these things are against you, do not despair, oh, do not give up, but remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is your friend, that he will never forget you, that he will forgive you as heartily as he did this poor woman, that he is always near you though you do not see him. All you have to do is to call upon him, to weep over your sins ; and though you may not be able to kiss his blessed feet and pour out your tears upon them, he will accept the will for the deed, he will accept your tears, he will hear you cry, he will reach out his hand, he will lift you out of your despair and fill your hearts with peace and joy.

In MacDonald's story of "Robert Falconer" is the following :

"In a very narrow, dirty street in one of the lowest parts of the city we turned in at a door and climbed a creaking stair to the very top of the house. Here we found a wretched room, which we entered softly. Two or three women sat by

the side of the chimney ; and another one sat by a low bed covered with a torn patchwork counterpane, spelling out a chapter in the Bible. We paused a moment to hear what she was reading. Had the book been opened by chance or design ? It was the story of David and Bathsheba. Moans came from the bed, but the candle in a bottle by which the woman was reading was so placed that we could not see the sufferer. We stood still and did not interrupt the reading. Presently a coarse voice said from the side of the chimney, ‘The saint, you see, was no better than some of the rest of us.’

“‘I think he was a good deal worse just then,’ said Falconer, stepping forward.

“‘Gracious ! there’s Mr. Falconer,’ said another woman, rising and speaking in a fluttering tone.

* * * * *

“‘Give me the book,’ he said, turning toward the bed. ‘I’ll read you something better than that. I’ll read about some one that never did anything wrong.’

“‘I don’t believe there ever was no such man,’ said the previous reader as she handed him the book.

“‘Not Jesus Christ himself?’ said Falconer.

“‘Oh, I didn’t know as you meant him.’

“‘Of course I meant him. There never was another.’

“‘I’ve heard tell,—p’r’aps it was yourself, sir,—as he didn’t come down on us overhard after all, bless him.’

“Falconer sat down on the side of the bed and read the story of the woman that was a sinner. When he ceased, the silence was broken by a sob from somewhere in the room. The sick woman stopped her moaning and said, ‘Turn down the leaf there, please, sir. Lillywhite will read it to me when you are gone.’

“The ‘some one’ sobbed again. It was a young, slender

girl, with a face disfigured with small-pox, and, but for the tearful look it wore, poor and expressionless. Falconer said something gentle to her.

“‘ Will he ever come again?’ she sobbed.

“‘ Who?’ said Falconer.

“‘ Him—Jesus Christ. I’ve heard tell, I think, that he was to come again some day.’

“‘ Why do you ask?’

“‘ Because,’ she said with a fresh burst of tears that rendered the words that followed unintelligible. But she recovered herself in a few moments, and, as if finishing her sentence, put her hand up to her poor, thin, colorless hair, and said, ‘ My hair ain’t long enough to wipe his feet.’

“‘ Do you know what he would say to you, my girl?’ he asked.

“‘ No; what would he say to me? He would speak to me, would he?’

“‘ He would say, “ Thy sins be forgiven thee.” ’

“‘ Would he though? would he?’ she cried, starting up. ‘ Take me to him. Oh, I forgot; he’s dead. But he will come again, won’t he? Would they crucify him again, sir?’

“‘ No, they would not crucify him now. They would only laugh at him, and shake their heads at what he told them, as much as to say it was not true, and sneer and mock at him in some of the newspapers.’

“‘ Oh dear! I’ve been very wicked.’

“‘ But you won’t be so any more.’

“‘ No, no, no; I won’t, I won’t, I won’t.’

“She talked hurriedly, almost wildly. The coarse old woman tapped her forehead with her finger. Falconer took the girl’s hand. ‘ What is your name?’ he said.

“‘ Nell.’

“‘ What more?’

“‘ Nothing more.’

“‘ Well, Nelly,’ said Falconer—

“‘ How kind of you to call me Nelly!’ interrupted the poor girl. ‘ They always calls me Nell just.’

“‘ Nelly,’ repeated Falconer, ‘ I will send a lady here to-morrow to take you away with her if you like, and tell you what you must do to find Jesus. People always find him that want to find him.’”

I have nothing more to say. If such a story of the mercy of Christ as I have given you from his gospel does not, under the power of the Holy Spirit, soften and melt your hearts and my heart, I do not see what can. But do not let us doubt it. We are sinners and he is the Saviour, the same Saviour. Let us go to him, believe in him, and weep over his gracious words.



O Saviour Christ, thou too art man ;
Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried ;
Thy kind but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide.
Thy touch has still its ancient power ;
No word from thee can fruitless fall :
Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in thy mercy heal us all.—H. TWELLS.

O Jesus Christ, I am very blind ;
Nothing comes through into my mind :
'Tis well I am not dumb.
Although I see thee not, nor hear,
I cry because thou mayst be near :
O Son of Mary, come !—GEORGE MACDONALD.

A thousand years have fleeted ;
And, Saviour, still we see
Thy deed of love repeated
On all who come to thee.
As he who sat benighted,
Afflicted, poor and blind,
So now (thy word is plighted)
Joy, light and peace I find.

—FREDERIC DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ.



ON THE WAY TO JERICHO.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BLIND BEGGAR.

OUR Lord was on his way to Jerusalem for the last time. He had crossed the Jordan above Jericho, perhaps near the same place where Joshua crossed with the hosts of Israel when they came in to conquer the land. When he was near the town the throng grew larger and the crowd pressed upon him more closely. In the three years of his public ministry his fame had become widely spread, and hundreds and thousands of people had heard of his miracles and of his many good deeds.

At the side of the rough road just before you reach the town, coming up from the Jordan valley, sat a blind beggar, a most pitiable object, and a very common object in the East. He had gone there, or had been placed there, in that public place by his friends, in the hope that the people from the country and the people from the city, as they went to and fro, might have compassion on the poor creature and drop something into his outstretched hand. Sitting there in the bright sunshine, but alas all in darkness, his hearing more acute because of his blindness, he heard the sound of an approaching multitude. Nearer and nearer it came, and he knew by the sound of tramping feet and the hurrying and shouting crowd that a great company was approaching. But the beggar could not see. You know with what eagerness you run to the door, or to the corner of the street, to see an excited crowd pass by. On came that rushing throng, and the blind man, ignorant and helpless, and dependent entirely upon others, asked what it meant. And they told him that

“Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” Oh, what news! Jesus the Son of God, the healer of the sick, the great Physician, he who opens the eyes of the blind,—Jesus is passing by. And, believing it was an opportunity not to be lost, that he may never be within reach of Jesus again, that if ever cured it must be now, he breaks out in that piercing, piteous cry, loud enough to be heard over the roar of the surging multitude, “Jesus, *thou* son of David, have mercy on me.”

There were those who rebuked the blind man. They did not like the interruption; they did not want a great procession stopped by the cry of a beggar; they had no sympathy with a blind man, for none of *them* were blind; and like the disciples who rebuked those who brought their little children to Jesus, like the Pharisees who rebuked those who shouted hosannas to the Son of David when he rode into Jerusalem, these people rebuked the blind man and wanted him to hold his peace.

Was he silenced by the harsh rebuke? Did he shrink back again to his seat by the roadside, hurt by the severe words which came from many lips, and afraid that he should be crushed under foot by the multitude? No; he was too much in earnest for this. He was not asking for money now. It was not a question of bread—whether he should starve or not; it was something far more important, it was a question of *sight* to one who was born blind, and he was not to be hindered, he was not to be discouraged; it was *now* or *never* with him, and the more they charged him to hold his peace, so much the more a great deal he cried out, “*Thou* son of David, have mercy on me!”

Do you think it strange that Jesus heard him? Do you think it strange that Jesus should notice him? It would have been strange if Jesus had *not* heard that cry. It would

have been strange if he had *not* noticed the blind man, for he never turned away from the cry of any one in distress.

So in the midst of that great throng he pauses, he stands still. How the people must have wondered! What will he do? What notice will he take of the interruption?

While the multitude are looking and wondering, Jesus commands the beggar to be brought to him. And when the people see this they speak cheerfully to the beggar, saying, "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." And he threw off his outer garment and rose and came hurriedly to Jesus. And when he was come near Jesus said, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" And he said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." And Jesus said, "Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus glorifying God.

Where was the *faith*? What did this beggar know about Jesus? Do you think he knew as much about him as you do? By no means. He may have heard of a great prophet who had come into the world, who had done wonderful works of healing, but he had never seen him, he had never seen any one who had been healed by him. How could he have faith in one whom he had never seen, and whose voice he had never heard? Somehow, we do not know how, this blind beggar had heard of Jesus; he believed in some way, we hardly know how, that he was not only *able* but *willing* to save those who called upon him, and he resolved that nothing should stand between him and this opportunity to have his eyes opened, and he pushed aside those who would have hindered him, and came into the immediate presence of Christ and told his pitiful story.

He must have believed that Jesus would have compassion on him. He must have believed that his poor, pitiful, help-

less condition would touch the sympathies of the compassionate Saviour. However other people might treat him, or whatever they might think of him, whether they would commend him or laugh at him, he determined to go and throw himself on the mercy of Christ. And he did, and you know he was cured of his blindness.

Has this story any lesson for us? What have we to do with it, except to hear or read it as one of the wonderful works of Jesus when on earth? What personal interest have we in it? Jesus is no longer in the world. He ascended into heaven forty days after his resurrection. He does not pass up and down our streets, we cannot call out to him, he would not hear us if we did, and we are not blind, and are not in need of healing.

Are you quite sure that Jesus never passes by you? Do you never feel that you would like to be a better boy, a better girl, than you have been? Do you never feel that you would like to stop all wrong-doing and begin to do right? Do you never feel, as you read or hear the Scriptures, that there are better things in store for you than you have ever had yet? Do you not sometimes feel, when you cannot sleep at night, a something that tells you that your life is not what it ought to be in the sight of God? Do you never think when you are brought near to a death-bed, or to the grave of a relative or friend, that God may be speaking to you, and that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by?

The incident at the gate of Jericho will never occur again. There are many blind men now, if not in Jericho, in other cities. They would all be glad to hear the voice of Jesus if they believed that he would restore their eyesight. They would go to any place, however distant, if they thought he would pass that way. There is no sacrifice too great to make

if they could only win his favor. The day of miracles, we believe, is past; but Jesus of Nazareth still lives, and though we cannot hear his voice, we know that he hears our cry for mercy as plainly as he heard the cry of the blind beggar.

He comes near to you, reader, in many ways, though you neither *see* him nor *hear* him; and very often you *care not for him*. In fact, to some of you I suppose his presence would be positively *unwelcome*. He is not likely to force himself upon you. He looks to see if you are willing to receive him.

I want you to believe that Jesus the Saviour is near to you now, that in fact he is near enough to hear you call for help if you cry out. Now call upon him. If you feel that you are a sinner, that very feeling is a reason why he should hear you. It is your plea for mercy. He has saved others. He has power to save you. He never refused an earnest and persevering suppliant for his mercy. Do not depend upon any good things you have done, or any good works you may yet do, for your salvation. You can be saved only through Christ. Go to him, tell him of your blindness, tell him of your guilt, tell him how hard it is to feel that you are a sinner.

If temptations assail you and charge you to hold your peace, then cry out the more a great deal, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." Be importunate, be persevering, beg for mercy alone. Cast yourself in your helplessness and guilt at your Saviour's feet, and say in the language of the hymn, "And if I perish I will pray, and perish only there." But then you shall not perish. Make the case of the blind beggar your own, and then you can adopt the fine old hymn of John Newton as your own, viz.:

“Mercy, O thou Son of David,”
 Thus blind Bartimæus prayed ;
 “Others by thy word are saved,
 Now to me afford thine aid.”

Many for his crying chid him,
 But he called the louder still ;
 Till the gracious Saviour bid him
 “Come and ask me what you will.”

Money was not what he wanted,
 Though by begging used to live ;
 But he asked, and Jesus granted,
 Alms which none but he *could* give.

“Lord, remove this grievous blindness,
 Let my eyes behold the day ;”
 Straight he saw, and, won by kindness,
 Followed Jesus in the way.

Oh, methinks I hear him praising,
 Publishing to all around,
 “Friends, is not my case amazing ?
 What a Saviour I have found !

“Oh that all the blind but knew him,
 And would be advised by me !
 Surely they would hasten to him,
 He would cause them all to see.”

Young reader, this lesson is to you. I believe I am moved by my Master and yours to write these plain things, in the hope that you may be persuaded to believe in him and give him your heart and begin a new life. I believe he is near you now, that he hears every word you speak, that he knows every unspoken thought that has been in your minds. It may be that you have already heard his tender call, and have accepted his offered grace ; blessed be his name if this is so ! But if you have not come to him, if you are not yet ready to come, if you are waiting for a more convenient season, if you

are saying "not now," "there will be other opportunities," "it will be easier after awhile than it is now," I do not say, I *dare* not say, that you will never have another opportunity, but I do say, and I say it in all earnestness, that you cannot afford to put it off, for you do not know that you will ever again have an opportunity as favorable as this. Why not then come now? For I assure you that nothing but your own unwillingness stands between your soul and the salvation of Christ. Before you close this book you can, if you will, give yourself to him and his service. Will you do it?



Oh may I always ready stand
With my lamp burning in my hand;
May I in sight of heaven rejoice,
Whene'er I hear the Bridegroom's voice!

—THOMAS KEN.

Beware, my soul; take thou good heed, lest thou in slumber lie,
And, like the five, remain without, and knock, and vainly cry;
But watch, and bear thy lamp undimmed, and Christ shall gird thee on
His own bright wedding-robe of light—the glory of thy Son.

—G. MOULTRIE.

And I pray to him who took *me* in,
To him who forgave me all my sin,
That those who wait in the dreary street,
With trembling hands and weary feet,
May also enter into rest,
And dwell, like me, in his presence blest.—B. MILLER.

“Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not.”—POLLOK.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

THIS chapter is about a wedding and some young girls. The scene is in Judæa, and the story is told by our Lord himself.

Weddings are always interesting, whether happy or otherwise. Almost the first thing we read in the newspapers is the list of the weddings. If a person should sit down to tell us of a marriage, there are certain things we should want to know about it; such as the names of the bride and groom, the names of the bridesmaids and groomsmen, and how many guests were there. And then we should want to know where they were to live, and whether they were well off in this world's goods or poor; whether the parents were willing, and whether they were likely to be happy.

Of the wedding described in this parable we really know very little. We do not know the names of the persons mentioned. The bride is not mentioned at all by name. Indeed we know nothing at all about this young couple. The story is not told for any such purpose as the gratification of curiosity: it is told for another and higher purpose. We are taught through a beautiful story that it is our duty to be prepared for the end of our life in this world.

There were ten virgins; they all had lamps. These lamps were all burning at first, when they set out; and they were all bright enough to secure them a place in a splendid marriage procession.

As is often the case in similar circumstances, they had to

wait. The bridegroom tarried ; the procession did not move as soon as was expected, and they all became weary and, doubtless, impatient. After waiting and waiting until far into the night, and much later than their usual time for rest, their eyes grew heavy. They struggled against the increasing drowsiness, as you have done when kept up longer than usual, until at last they all slumbered and slept. You must not blame them for this ; you must not think it strange ; for it was in the dead of night, they had been busy with their preparations, the reaction which follows excitement was upon them, and it was perfectly natural for them to fall asleep.

Scholars say that there is a difference in the meaning of the words "slumbered" and "slept" which our English words hardly show. It is said that while "slumbered" means nodding, as one does in a chair (or sometimes in church), with the head going from side to side to keep awake, the word "slept" means heavy sleeping, as one sleeps in bed, with the limbs composed and at rest. I don't know whether the wise virgins simply nodded or slept heavily, or whether there was any difference between the two classes in this respect ; I only know that neither class is blamed in the narrative for sleeping, nor need we blame them.

They seem to have slept a long time, at least they slept until midnight, when they were awakened by a shout which startled and roused them all, the heavy sleepers as well as the slumberers. That shout or cry was, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him." Then they all arose and seized their lamps ; some had burned low, the wicks were stiff and thick ; others were going out entirely. Some needed trimming, others needed filling. Whether they were all full of oil and well trimmed when they set out we do not know, but we know they were not in good condition now.

It is probable that those who are called the wise had carried oil in other vessels to fill their lamps when necessary, not knowing how long they might be kept waiting.

Be that as it may, we know that they whose lamps were going out asked the others, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out." A very natural request, you will say, and we almost wonder why such a request was not granted. But it was refused; and the reason given is, "Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

The virgins whose lamps were going out are called "foolish virgins," meaning careless, indifferent, dull, lazy. They were improvident; they had not made preparation for what they were to do. Being disappointed in their appeal to the others (who told them to go to the storekeepers and buy oil), they set out on their errand.

I wonder if they were in a hurry? I wonder if they ran? I do not think so. It is much more likely that they would say, "Oh, what's the use of hurry! There's time enough; he is not in sight yet; we don't hear any sound yet; we don't hear the music."

Nevertheless, while they were gone to buy the bridegroom came; and he did not wait for them, no, not a moment; but the procession swept on in all its brightness, with its music and blazing lights and gay followers, into the house; the wise virgins entered with their trimmed and flashing lamps in their hands.

Then what? The door was shut. There are few sadder words than these, "*the door was shut.*" They mean that the opportunity was past, the time was gone by, the last chance was lost; it was too late.

The foolish virgins came back, no doubt, with their lamps

filled with oil and burning brightly ; they came back and went up to the door. It was closed. No doubt they knocked long and loud. We know they called, we know the words of their call, " Lord, Lord, open to us." They wanted the bridegroom to open the door and let them in.

Amid all the festivities, the music and the dancing, he heard them, he answered them ; but did he grant their request ? Did he open the door ? No. What did he say ? " I know you not." What could he mean by this ? Surely he knew them. He meant this : " You do not belong to the company ; you were not in the procession ; I do not know you." Was this all ? All that he said ; but, alas ! the foolish virgins were outside in the dark and in the cold ; while the wise virgins were inside, where the marriage festival was going on, and where everything was bright and joyous.

The simple teaching of this parable, as I said at first, is that we must all be prepared for the coming of Christ. The bridegroom is the Son of man. The ten virgins with the lamps are those who are invited to the marriage feast, ourselves ; the time of waiting is our life here on the earth, our probation while we are on trial. The oil in the lamps represents the grace of Christ or the love of Christ in the heart ; the great procession is the multitude of believers ; the house into which they enter is heaven ; and the outside is that region of outer darkness which is to be the place of the lost.

There are certain respects in which these virgins were all alike. They were all virgins ; they were all invited to the wedding ; they were all waiting for the bridegroom ; they all heard the call to join in the procession ; they all might have gone into the supper and with rejoicing ; they all had lamps ; their lamps were all probably alike ; they all went to sleep

(human nature at the best grows weary); they all arose at the midnight cry ; they were all startled and surprised. Thus far, you see, these virgins were all alike ; they agree outwardly ; they have travelled the same road ; the spectators, the world, saw no difference between them.

But now come the points in which they were not alike.

The wise had taken oil in their vessels with their lamps ; the foolish it seems had not. At midnight the lamps of the wise were still burning ; we suppose so, at least, for they only wanted trimming ; but as to the foolish, their lamps were going out. The wise were prepared to meet the bridegroom ; but the others, the foolish, alas ! were not ; and midnight was no time to buy oil. The wise could not supply them ; the wise virgins went into the feast through the open door ; but when the others came the door was shut.

The first lesson that may be learned from this parable is that we must watch. The foolish virgins were not blamed, and they suffered, not because they slept, but because, when awakened, they had no oil, they were not prepared ; and the whole object of watching is preparation. They were surprised, and it was too late then to make the preparation that was needed.

The use that we ought to make of this lesson is to watch over our lives. We should watch over our hearts that we indulge no improper thoughts ; we should set a watch over our lips that we speak no improper words ; we should watch our conduct that we do nothing to hurt or grieve any person whatever. We ought to know that if we do not watch, if we do not prepare, we shall be surprised.

The bridegroom will certainly come. Other things may be uncertain ; no one can say absolutely what your condition or mine is to be in the future life ; but it is certain that the

bridegroom will come. There is to be a midnight cry: we shall all hear it.

There is such a thing as a lamp without oil. The foolish virgins had lamps, but they were empty; and an empty lamp with no oil at hand is utterly useless.

There is to be disappointment. God forbid that any of us should be disappointed! If there are those in the world, young or old, who disregard all these warnings, who turn a deaf ear to these teachings, who close their eyes against the light and truth which illuminate the word of God and flash through his providences,—if there must be such, so self-willed, so unteachable, God forbid that it should be any of us!



WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM.

Everything fits in at last, my friends! No cravings are given in vain. There is always something in store to account for them, you may be quite sure. You *may* have to wait a bit, some of you a shorter, some a longer time; but *do* wait, and everything will fit in and be perfect at last.—MRS. GATTY.

Think'st thou he hears not, when for many a day
Thy knees are worn with fasting and with prayer?
Think'st thou he turns from any love away,
Because thou see'st no angel on the air?
Tempter, away! each throb of pain he knows;
I will kneel on and wait his blessed time.

All as God wills, who wisely heeds
To give or to withhold,
And knoweth more of all my needs
Than all my prayers have told.—WHITTIER.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WIDOW.

THIS is a character from one of the parables of our Saviour. His purpose in speaking the parable is plain. It was not to teach his disciples to pray merely, for that duty had been fully set forth in the sermon on the mount. It was to teach the duty and necessity of perseverance in prayer, and to hold out encouragements to persevere. An old writer has said that “the key of this parable hangs at the door;” it is the first thing seen. “He spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

I want to show the meaning of the parable, or rather to explain it so that we can see how it is to be applied to ourselves.

I do not suppose that our Saviour meant to teach that people should be engaged all the time in prayer, alone or in places of public or social prayer. He could not have meant that his people should be on their knees continually, asking his blessing on themselves or others. This would be impossible. We live in a world of labor and toil, where we must be at work or in business of some kind to support ourselves or those who may be dependent upon us; and God has commanded us to be “not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:11). If we take it literally, therefore, to pray always, we shall find contradictory directions in the Bible itself. I suppose that the Saviour meant that people should always be in a praying mood; and that in the midst of their daily work they might often be lifting up their hearts to God. And it is possible to be in such a frame of mind.

There was a company of ministers once who met stately for conference and prayer and for the discussion of any subject which might come before them. One day this question was proposed : "How can we pray without ceasing?" Many and various things were said, until finally one of the number was appointed to write upon it and read his paper at the next monthly meeting. There was a plain girl, a housemaid, who heard this appointment ; and she exclaimed, "What ! a whole month wanted to answer that question ! It is one of the easiest and best texts in the Bible." "Well," said an old minister, "what can you say about it ? Let us hear how you understand it. Can you pray all the time?" "Oh yes, sir." "What ! when you have so many things to do?" "Why, sir, the more I have to do the more I can pray." "Indeed ? Well, do let us know how it is, for most persons think otherwise." "Well," said the girl, "when I first open my eyes in the morning I pray, Lord, open the eyes of my understanding ; and while I am dressing, I pray that I may be clothed with the robe of righteousness ; and when I have washed, I ask for the washing of regeneration ; and as I begin work, I pray that I may have strength equal to my day ; and when I begin to kindle the fire, I pray that God's work may be revived in my soul ; and as I sweep out the house, I pray that my heart may be cleansed from all its impurities ; and while preparing and eating breakfast, I pray to be fed with the hidden manna, the bread that came down from heaven, and with the sincere milk of the word ; and as I am busy with the little children, I look up to God as my Father, and pray for the spirit of adoption that I may be his child ; and so on all day. Everything that I do furnishes me with a thought for a prayer."

Here then is a disciple in the humblest walks of life, and

working all the time, and a kind of work too which would seem to have no connection with sacred duties, lifting up her heart to God all through the day, and asking his blessing. Who can doubt that she was obeying the command, "Pray without ceasing"?

To faint in prayer is to grow weary or discouraged because our prayers are not answered immediately. But there is no promise in the Bible that God will immediately grant our prayers by giving the very things that we ask for. We are so ignorant of our true wants, or what is best for us to have, that we sometimes pray with much earnestness for things that it would not be best for us to have; things which God, who knows all things, knows it would not be good to give us. A mother who sees her infant wasting under a fatal disease may ask God with earnest cries for its recovery; and as she sees the little body racked with pain she may implore, with all the fervor of a mother's deep affection, the mercy of God to spare its life; and yet the little sufferer sinks until the last throb, the last struggle is over, and it is stiffened in death. God, who knows all things, knows that it would be better to remove that child from this world to heaven, and the mother is left to her bereavement. He does not always do exactly what we ask in our prayers; but if we pray in faith he will always do what is best.

The character of the judge in this parable is remarkable. He had no sense of accountability to God, and cared not for man. Sitting in the chair of justice, clothed with high power, placed over the people to settle their disputes and differences, bound to administer the law, he was the slave of his own misguided will.

In the city where he lived there was a widow, one of a class whose peculiar condition ought to have excited his

deepest sympathy. Deprived of her natural protector, and suffering from the oppression of a wicked enemy, she went to the judge for relief. "Avenge me of mine adversary," was her prayer. But the judge did not hear her, or rather he did not care for her. Day after day, and whenever she had the opportunity, she pressed her plea, but in vain. There was no response. Perhaps the poor suppliant was too humble to attract much attention, and too obscure to enlist any friends in her behalf. For some time the judge made no reply to her petition; but at length, when he became wearied with her ceaseless importunities, he resolved to grant her request. See the motive that led him to do right! "Though I fear not God, nor regard man," said he; "yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." What a confession! He resolves to do her justice, not because she was oppressed and imposed upon, but to silence her and to avoid her importunity.

"And," says the Saviour in applying the teaching of the parable, "shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."

Let us see now how many discouragements the widow met in her appeals to the judge.

1. *She went as a stranger.* It is hardly likely that one so humble as she was could have been acquainted with one so high as the judge, especially with one as proud as he was. There was no remembrance of former pleasant intercourse, no recollection of little acts of kindness, of favors given or received, to make approach to him free from embarrassment even; but there was the chilling thought that she was going to a stranger, who would not be likely to take any interest in her distress. How different is our condition! When we go to

God in prayer, not only are we not strangers to him, but we are his own creatures, and, if we love him, his special friends. We are not strangers nor foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. What a tender relation is this! We are not only the friends of God, but we belong to his household. And if we are true disciples we have a right to come as children to our Father in heaven. If the unjust judge then attended to the petition of a stranger, shall not God attend to the prayers of those whom he loves and whom he has made his friends?

2. *She was only one to make request.* She represented no party, and had no circle of powerful friends whose influence it would be desirable to secure. There was nothing at all in her circumstances to recommend her to the favor of an unjust judge, and her only plea was justice—"avenge me of mine adversary ;" save me from my oppressor.

When a Christian prays he does not go alone in prayer. The very prayer which he is taught to offer implies in the first word that he does not go alone: "Our Father who art in heaven." The ear of the Lord is always open to the voice of prayer, and earnest, fervent prayer is always ascending to the throne of grace,—in the church, in the school-room, in the daily family worship, at our bedside as we kneel down night and morning. While we pray we may be sure that there are many others praying, and some of them praying with and praying for us. We know that others are bowing to the same God, our common Father. When we are alone and praying we know that God's eye is upon us, that we are a part of his great family, coming to him every night and morning, with the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise. Our prayers then never ascend alone; they are always accompanied by the devout breathings of other hearts.

3. Whenever the widow went to the judge he turned away; he did not want to assist her. How different is God toward us! He has commanded us to seek his face; and will he hide his face from us? He has taught us to look up to him as a Father; will he then mock us by turning away and forbidding us his presence? He has said that whosoever cometh in the name of Christ shall in no wise be cast out; can we think that he will repulse us by turning away that face of blessedness and peace, and shut us out? Has any one ever really sought the favor of God and been denied? Can any one say, "I sought the Lord sorrowing, with penitence and faith, and he was not found of me. I took my burden of sin to the Saviour to roll it off upon him, trusting in his mercy alone for forgiveness, and he refused to receive me. I went to him with a heart broken with trials and afflictions, and he gave me no relief. I felt that the world did not and could not satisfy the needs of my soul, and I sought that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, that peace which is not affected by earthly changes, but I was disappointed. His ear was deaf to my entreaties, his heart was not moved by my sorrows"? No one can say this; a sincere prayer was never offered that did not reach the throne of grace. Whatever may be our situation or circumstances, God is always willing to hear our prayers. In the hour of sickness, when the frail body is afflicted with pain or debility, if the mind can be composed to pray, the prayer reaches him. When away from home, and among those who care little for the Being whom we worship, and when absent from the place of our daily secret prayers, God is as near to us as ever. In the time of adversity, when dark clouds hang heavy and low, and when the moral horizon gives no light to the distressed spirit, the place of prayer is open and God waits

to hear. When distressing afflictions come and take away those whom we love best, and leave our hearts crushed and bleeding, God comes near, and in answer to prayer gives his consolations, which are neither few nor small. In the dying hour, when the soul is about to leave the body and enter the eternal world, the Saviour is near to listen to the breathings of our last prayer. In sickness and health, in prosperity and adversity, at home or abroad, among strangers or friends, we can always pray. His ear is not heavy that he cannot hear.

4. *The widow went on her own account.* The business which took her to the judge was her own. No one was interested in her affairs, and no advantage would come to any one besides herself if her prayer was granted. How different is the errand upon which we go to God in prayer! If our prayers are granted, God's glory will be advanced. The business which brings us to offer prayer concerns the majesty of heaven. We do not pray for ourselves only, but for our fellow men everywhere. We pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." We pray that the gospel may be preached everywhere, and that all men may be led to believe and obey it. "Uphold me with thy free spirit," said David. "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

5. *The widow went alone.* She had no powerful friend who had influence with the judge to go with her to his house. She had no one to plead her cause and move his sympathy or sense of right. She was alone, but she hesitated not to go with boldness and present her own cause.

But we have a great Friend, a powerful Intercessor. The Lord Jesus ever liveth and maketh intercession for us. He is our Friend and High Priest. He stands and offers the

prayers of his people to God the Father. Will not these prayers be accepted?

6. *The widow had no promise.* Have we? "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." (John 16:26.) Such are a few of the promises which encourage us to draw nigh to God. But the Bible is full of them; they stand out on almost every page, and invite us to come and find eternal life.

7. *Whenever she went the judge was provoked.* In fact it was the annoyance which moved him to grant her request. Do we provoke God by the frequency or the importunity of our prayers? Alas, no! but by our silence and indifference. After such encouragements and promises to prayer, God is grieved that we pray so little. How cold are our best prayers! How often do we only say our prayers! How short are our seasons of prayer! The Saviour spent whole nights in prayer. Shall we then deny him a little portion of our time morning and evening, to praise him for his mercies and to ask for a continuance of them? Shall we grudge the time to ask him for his blessing for ourselves and for those whom we love? Think how rich and powerful God is, and how willing he is to do us good, if only we are willing to ask him! And think how utterly indifferent and ungrateful are those who live day after day, and year after year, and never pray to God! Let none of you live so; but begin now, if you have never done it before, and determine that no day shall ever pass without prayer to God, through Jesus Christ the Saviour.

Oh joy to every doubting heart,
Doing the thing it would,
When he, the holy, takes its part,
And calls its choice the good.—GEO. MACDONALD.

Whene'er thou speakest to me I am happy ;
When thou art silent I am satisfied.
Thy presence is enough, I ask no more.
Only to be with thee, only to see thee,
Sufficeth me. My heart is then at rest.—LONGFELLOW.

O Martha, sister, spare thy labor and thy cost ;
Tending the food that perisheth, diviner food is lost.

—RICHARD CRASHAW.



IN THE HOME OF MARY AND MARTHA.

CHAPTER XV.

MARY AND MARTHA.

I GIVE you a little incident in the history of a Jewish household. The village where the family lived was Bethany. So far as we know there were but three persons in the family, two sisters and a brother. No mention is made of the brother in the incident to which I refer; probably he was absent from home at this time.

We learn from other passages of Scripture that our Lord was in the habit of visiting this family. He had no home of his own, and when in Jerusalem or in the neighborhood he found a temporary home with these two sisters and their brother. We need not ask if he was a welcome guest; the narrative shows this clearly enough.

One day, in his journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, Jesus with his disciples came again into this village, and Martha, who seems to have been the oldest member of the family, received him into her house. And the sacred writer says that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus;" and it is very likely that since his childhood and youth and early manhood at Nazareth his happiest hours had been spent in this family.

We cannot help thinking that the visits of Jesus would make some stir. He was a very plain man; he was plainly, perhaps meanly, clad; he travelled on foot; he was poor; but wherever he went he carried light and love. When we read then that Martha received him into her house, we recall the incident when Zaccheus made haste and came down and "received" him joyfully.

At once Martha began to prepare an entertainment for her guest. Of course the best in the house was offered, but in such families as this the entertainment was probably very simple; bread and honey and the common red wine of the country and fruits were probably all that was provided. But while Martha was busy in preparing such simple articles of food for Jesus and his friends, she observed that her sister Mary, who as she thought ought to be helping her, was sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to his words.

In the excitement of her own busy occupation Martha forgets for a moment her love and her duty to her guest, and she breaks out in that expression which was a rebuke to her gentle sister and a reproof to her Master: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

If you will remember that in the hurried preparation for the entertainment of guests there might have been many things to vex and worry the mistress of the house, you will perhaps be more inclined to excuse poor Martha for her thoughtlessness and her harsh and almost cruel words.

But her sister Mary was sitting at her Lord's feet and hearing his word. What were those gracious words that fell from his lips? Oh that we knew them! But they are not recorded; and our imagination may only attempt to conceive their richness and tenderness.

Probably Mary was employed in some household work before Jesus came; for Martha seems to intimate that she had dropped it or left it, or left Martha to serve alone without her help. Martha begins her complaint in a respectful manner, "Lord," or "Master," "Sir;" but she forgets this and goes on to say, "dost thou not care that my sister hath left me?" She chides his want of care, and dictates to her Lord.

Now in a certain sense Martha may have been right in chiding her sister, but not in rebuking the Lord. It was her duty to entertain her Lord and to give him the best she had ; and, either to make the entertainment more complete or to hasten the preparation, it was right for her to require Mary's assistance. If she was overdoing the matter, if she was vexing and irritating herself and her family by unnecessary preparation, as it seems she was, then she was wrong and deserved the rebuke she received.

You see our Lord does not rebuke Martha for serving, but for too much serving. He tells her she is careful and troubled about "many things." She ought not to fret ; she ought not to be anxious ; for however vexatious and wearing are her domestic duties, there is one thing that is needful, that is, one thing supremely important, and "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Now both these women were true disciples of Jesus ; both of them loved the Lord from the heart ; both of them would gladly have spent their lives in his service.

But there was a difference between them, a difference of temperament, of disposition, as we say. Mary was quiet, gentle, contemplative, devotional ; she saw with more heavenly eyes, was moved with a purer, more perfect love. Martha was active, bustling, stirring ; apparently more anxious to do than to be. Mary seems to have been more anxious to be than to do. There are some people who seem to think that to be religious one must be up and doing, must be actively employed in outward religious works all the time. But just see how many people there are who cannot be up and doing all the time ! Think of the sick who are confined for months and years to their sick-beds or sick-rooms ! They cannot be up and doing. They must sit or lie at the feet of Jesus.

Although Mary was sitting quietly at the feet of Jesus and hearing his word, she was not idling her time away. She was ready for any active duty to which she might have been called. I have no doubt she would have sprung to her feet to wait on Christ, if he had called her. I believe she would have been as ready as Martha to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or care for the stranger, or visit the sick or the prisoner, or to do whatever Jesus said. And I believe she was more truly entertaining him by sitting at his feet and listening to his words than by vexing herself with household cares or cumbering herself by much serving, even though it was in honor of the Lord himself. There was something in her quicker instinct, her purer and more heavenly love, that told her that she could best prove her devotion to Jesus by sitting and hearing his gracious words.

Yet we must not suppose she was a dreaming, sentimental woman, difficult to arouse to action, with no self-sacrifice. It does not appear that she was indifferent to household duties generally; it was because she felt it more important to embrace this opportunity to listen to the words of Christ that she exposed herself to Martha's censure. Jesus did not blame her; he praised her, rather, for giving the preference to the more important duty. And when we turn to look at Martha, we cannot help feeling that it is a good thing to be an active, industrious housekeeper. Jesus does not blame her for this, but for overdoing it to the neglect of other things which are more important. And after all, housekeeping is not the most important thing in the world. There is another thing that is more important still. It is that good part which Jesus told Martha that Mary had chosen—that “one thing needful,” that good part “which shall not be taken away from her.” This one thing is the word of Christ, heavenly food, religion.

Now we might naturally suppose that Jesus would take this opportunity of indulging his human feelings, and that he would tell Martha at least that he appreciated her kind trouble. But the supreme importance that he attached to his own office as a religious teacher made him put aside everything that might have interfered with the carrying out of his work in any one soul. Mary was listening to his words, and rather than allow her to be deprived of this precious benefit, Christ let the good and kind Martha, who was lovingly busying herself for him, feel somewhat hurt. He made these two affectionate women see that he had bread to give them that would endure to eternal life.

I believe it is easier to do good than to be good ; and you will all agree with me if you will think about it. And I believe that as it is an easier thing to do good works than to be good in our thoughts and in our lives, many persons make the mistake of supposing that they are Christians, when they are only employed in good works. It is not a pleasant thing and not an easy thing to look into our hearts and examine ourselves, asking ourselves searching questions as to why we do certain things which it seems to be right to do. Suppose you are in the habit of reading the Scriptures and in the habit of daily secret prayer. Now just ask yourself why you do these things. I do not answer the questions for you, though perhaps I might do so ; but it is better that you should answer the questions for yourselves and to yourselves. If you are not reading and praying every day, why are you not ? If you *are* in the habit of doing these good things, why do you do them ? Do you read and pray for the same reason that Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and heard his word—because she loved the Saviour ? or do you do so because your conscience will give you no rest if you neglect them ?

There is a feeling in the heart something like this: obedience in certain things will make up for the neglect of certain other things. But you ought to know that you cannot blot out a sin by doing a duty. Future obedience cannot atone for past offences. Nothing but the grace of God through Christ can forgive sins and put them away. You may try other means for the cleansing and renewing of the heart, but they will fail. Others have tried in ten thousand instances, but always without success.

It is easier to go to a religious service and listen to the good words that come from the lips of a Christian teacher than it is to shut one's self up and commune with the heart. It is easier to go to church three times a day than to go once or twice a day and then spend part of the rest of the time in the reading and study of the Bible. If the heart is right, if we are good, there will be no trouble about good works; doing good will follow of course.

Martha was a good, faithful woman, and Jesus loved her; but she allowed her zeal in the desire to work for her Lord to outrun her judgment. The work she did for Jesus was a good work, but there was too much of it. She allowed it to cumber her and distress her, and hinder her in other and better work. He had rebuked her for this, although the work was done for him.

There was another and a better part which Mary chose. It was to sit at the Lord's feet. The work of the house could be done any day; it was done every day,—the preparation of meals, and other duties; but Jesus did not come to that house every day, and now that he is there, Mary thinks it better for her to catch every word that drops from his lips, for to-morrow he will be gone. And Jesus commends Mary because she chose that which could not be taken from her,—that is, divine instruction and faith.

In Longfellow's "Divine Tragedy" this is Mary's address to the Master, at whose feet she sits while Martha bustles about :

O Master! when thou comest it is always
A Sabbath in the house. I cannot work ;
I must sit at thy feet, must see thee, hear thee.
I have a feeble, wayward, doubting heart,
Incapable of endurance or great thoughts,
Striving for something that it cannot reach,
Ruffled and disappointed, wounded, hungry ;
And only when I hear thee am I happy,
And only when I see thee am at peace.
Stronger than I, and wiser, and far better
In every manner, is my sister Martha.
Thou seest how well she orders everything
To make thee welcome ; how she comes and goes,
Careful and cumbered ever with much serving,
While I but welcome thee with foolish words.
Whene'er thou speakest to me, I am happy ;
When thou art silent, I am satisfied.
Thy presence is enough ; I ask no more.
Only to be with thee, only to see thee,
Sufficeth me : my heart is then at rest.

Does it ever occur to you that Jesus comes to your house ? It may be at meal-time : do you ask him to bless the food ? It may be at bed-time : do you ask him to "abide with us ; for . . . the day is far spent" ? It may be in the early morning : do you ask him to stay and spend the day with you ? We cannot see him, we cannot hear his voice, but he comes just as near as if we could.

The lessons that I draw from this household incident are—

1. To be thoroughly true is a higher service, a larger service, a more lasting service, than to speak the truth.
2. To be pure in heart brings you nearer to God, does

more for your fellow creatures, bears a more excellent fruit, than a life spent in helping others to be pure.

3. To be a Christian in your daily life makes more Christians than preaching the gospel.

Oh then, if any of you wish to do good, if any of you wish to serve the Lord and do his will, and if you think that the opportunities are not favorable, that you do not know how to serve him, let me tell you that the best way, though it is the hardest way,—the best way is to be good yourselves.



BETHANY.

Oh happy home! where with the hands of prayer
Parents commit their children to the Friend,
Who, with a more than mother's tender care,
Will watch and keep them safely to the end;
Where they are taught to sit at Jesus' feet,
And listen to the words of life and truth,
And learn to lisp his praise in accents sweet,
From early childhood to advancing youth.

—*Lyra Domestica.*

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience.—**To TIMOTHY.**

Self, the natural man, the old Adam, must have risen up before each of us in early manhood, if not sooner, challenging the true man within us, to which the Spirit of God is speaking, to a struggle for life or death. Gird yourself then for the fight, my young brother. This world and all others, time and eternity, for you hang upon the issue.—**HUGHES.**

CHAPTER XVI.

TIMOTHY.

IN his first missionary tour, and in one of the cities of Asia Minor, probably Antioch in Pisidia, the apostle Paul met for the first time the man who afterwards became his most intimate friend, the young Timothy, then probably about twenty years of age. The circumstance is not mentioned at the time, nor indeed for some two years afterwards, when the apostle was on his second missionary tour, and was visiting the same cities.

Among the throngs of young men who were attracted by the strange preachers there must have been many of more or less interest, but among them all this young man stands out as the most conspicuous, and in many respects the most interesting, of all those who were turned to the Christian faith by the preaching of Paul.

There must have been something in the character of this young man that made him specially attractive to the apostle. What was it?

It could not have been that they were of the same age, for Paul must have been about fifty years old, and Timothy was not half that age. Men in middle or advanced life are not apt to take into their closest friendship very young men. Neither was it that there was any bond of previous sympathy to draw them together ; for Timothy was of mixed parentage, his father being a Greek in religion, while his mother was a Jewess. It must have been that Timothy gave himself to the work of the Lord with all his heart. There was nothing uncertain or hesitating about him ; he was not afraid of anything.

He seems not to have been a member of the Jewish church, even although most carefully instructed in the Jewish Scriptures. He had a faithful mother and a faithful grandmother also, and they had trained him in the best ways to honor God and obey his parents.

Timothy seems to have been in Antioch when Paul and Barnabas visited that city first, and he followed them in their tour through the cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. He was a witness to the persecutions the apostles suffered at the hands of that fickle people, who at one moment would have offered sacrifices to them, supposing them to be gods, and at the next stoned Paul, as they supposed, to death. And yet, as far as we know, Timothy did not make himself known to the apostles at all. But this strange experience must have led him to repentance and the Christian way. Two years after this Paul found him at Lystra, living with his mother, who also believed ; and it was the cause of great joy to Paul that not only she but her mother shared with Timothy the faith of the gospel.

Whatever it was that attracted Paul to Timothy, it is certain that it was to be a companionship of the closest character. The apostle wanted Timothy to go forth with him on his missionary journeys, and the young disciple became one of the band of missionaries. He left his home, his mother and his grandmother, if they were still living, and with no promise of reward in this world he gave up all for Christ. He went with the apostles through the cities of Asia Minor until they reached Troas, where the vision appeared to Paul which determined him to leave the shores of Asia and go over into Europe. Timothy was with Paul in the first voyage across the Ægean Sea, when they landed at Neapolis and proceeded to Philippi, where the most interesting incident of the con-

version of Lydia occurred, followed by the arrest, punishment and imprisonment of Paul and Silas in the dungeon of that city. He was with them in their journey through Greece to Thessalonica, where, on the Sabbath, in the synagogue, under the preaching of Paul, an uproar was raised by the Jews, and the Christians were driven out of the city to Berea ; but as it was not safe for Paul to remain there in easy reach of the Jews, he was sent away by the sea to go to Athens, while Silas and Timothy remained there until it should be safe for them to go to that place by land.

Timothy, however, was not able to join his master at Athens ; but some time after this, when Paul had gone to Corinth, the capital of lower Greece and a place of great importance, Silas and Timothy came again and joined him and took their part in the work.

Timothy, however, had not been idle while Paul was at Athens. He had been sent to Thessalonica on a mission to the church there, a mission requiring great tact and wisdom ; and when the report of the success of that visit was made to the apostle at Corinth, he was greatly comforted and rejoiced at the success.

After a stay of some eighteen months in Corinth, Paul set sail for Syria, Timothy being in his company, touching at Ephesus, and thence on to Jerusalem.

When Paul set out on his third and last missionary tour, Timothy was found still in his company. They took the same course as before, visiting the churches and establishing them in the faith. At Ephesus a long stay was made ; and while here Timothy was sent again across the sea to Macedonia. It is almost certain he went to Corinth again, for that was one of the most important places in which the apostle had planted a church. From thence Timothy proceeded to Ephesus, and

no doubt was present at the famous burning of the books ; then he was sent to Macedonia again ; and then into lower Greece, where he was joined by the apostle again ; and from thence the company passed through Macedonia to Philippi, and so over the sea again to Troas once more, from whence they had first set out for Europe.

After this, for a time, we hear nothing of Timothy, and are left to conjecture where he was. Some think that he returned to his old home in Derbe or Lystra, and waited for further directions from his master ; but this is only supposition. We almost wish we could identify Timothy with his master during his strange experience at Jerusalem ; his escape by night from the fury of the Jews, under the military escort, to Cæsarea ; his long imprisonment there ; the mock trials (we can call them nothing else) ; the long voyage and his shipwreck at Malta ; and his arrival a prisoner at Rome the next spring ; but we are not able to do so.

Soon after, however, we know that Timothy rejoined his master at Rome, though his master was now a prisoner and to be tried for his life.

There is reason to believe that Timothy remained with Paul during the whole time of the first imprisonment, more than two years. If so, he must have been present at the trial and acquittal and the discharge from prison.

The love that Paul felt for Timothy is something remarkable. This is shown not only in the two epistles that the apostle wrote to him, but also in those which he wrote to the churches. He makes very frequent mention of him ; speaks of the great services Timothy renders him ; of the great comfort he has in his disciple's company and sympathy ; and he gives him the great honor of associating the young disciple's name with his own in the greetings in several of the epistles

that he addresses to others. When he speaks or writes of Timothy it is in most endearing terms, such as "my own son in the faith;" "my child;" "I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state." Indeed he mentions the name of Timothy more than twenty times. What an honor!

There are three traits, perhaps, in the character of Timothy which, more than any others, mark him as the man to whom the great apostle would turn for sympathy and companionship. They are *fidelity, affection and zeal*.

His *fidelity*, or faithfulness, was shown in the readiness with which he entered upon any duty to which he was called, and by staying in any place to which he was sent. We cannot think he ever hesitated when he was directed to go here or there; that he ever questioned the wisdom of him who sent him. He must have been sent to places of which he knew nothing, and among people who were strangers to him, and upon errands that required great skill and tact; and so far as we know, or have reason to believe, he went and stayed and was faithful in all things committed to his care.

His *affection* was shown in giving up his family ties for the cause of Christ, as made known to him by his master. To that master he devoted himself with an earnestness of affection which knew no abatement, so far as we know, as long as the apostle lived. He was with his master in heat and cold, in perils of robbers, and in perils of waters, and in perils by the Jews. He followed him to Rome, and probably stayed with him in his gloomy prison, and served him with the loving affection of a son.

When they were separated, as they were in Paul's second imprisonment, and when the apostle pined in his prison alone, he longed for the society of his child, his son, as he called

him ; and he wrote him two letters, which will carry Timothy's name down through all history to the end of time. The letters are full of good counsel, both to Timothy personally and also to him as a most important officer in the Church of Christ. No one can read these letters and not feel that the heart of the master goes out to his pupil, his son in the faith.

The *zeal* of Timothy is shown by his entire devotion to the work of the Lord as a missionary with Paul. He was probably well educated ; his father was a Greek in religion ; he had opportunities of education in the schools ; he must have been qualified to go among men and to speak to them of the most important things that concern them ; and the education of the schools then, as now, must have made him all the better qualified for this great work. He might have turned his education to purposes of trade, or to the learned professions, or to letters, as men of his time did ; but he had higher aims than these ; he believed in the new religion, the religion of Jesus Christ, and his zeal led him to give up everything for Christ, who gave himself to the death of the cross to save sinners. So far as we know, that zeal never wavered. He never looked back, he never regretted that he had given up all ; he went right on, knowing nothing but his duty to follow Christ, as he was directed by his master.

What are the lessons that the life of Timothy brings to us ? Why not take the same three words—*fidelity*, *affection* and *zeal*—which were so prominent in his life, and apply them to ourselves ?

1. *Fidelity*. How can I apply this to you ? It means faithfulness in everything that pertains to our duty to God, to those who are set over us and to one another. “Whatever duties we may have to perform to ourselves or others,

we ought never to neglect or slight them to save ourselves inconvenience or trouble ; but we ought to perform them in a thorough, careful and prudent manner.”

Your duty to God is the first duty for you to perform. You know that he made you, and that he has a right to all that you are or can have. He does not require a hard service. He asks your love and obedience, and promises to you all that you need in this life and in the life that is to come. Any man that could come and offer you such terms, you would receive with shouts of joy ; but when God offers this, you turn coldly away, and say in effect that you do not believe in it and do not care for it ; and all that can be said and done for you cannot move your will.

But you have duties to those who are placed over you at school. You are there for education ; but it is entirely beyond the power of those who teach, to make you learn. That is your part ; and if you are faithful to those who teach you, the purpose of your being at school will be accomplished. But you must be faithful in the study of your lessons and faithful in the part you take in all that concerns your education. You cannot suppose that young Timothy, when he went to his Greek school, frittered away his time and his opportunities and allowed the season of youth and his school-boy days to pass, making little or no improvement, as some boys that you and I know, do ; else he had not been chosen by the great apostle to be his companion and friend—his own son, as he called him—and so have his name sent down through these ages of history.

You owe duties to your companions, your schoolmates, as well. The young people who are about you in your every-day life have claims upon you—every one of them has—as you also have claims upon them. You owe it to each other

to be manly, upright, abhorring lies and having no sympathy with liars and with those who indulge in improper talk. There ought to be a tone of manliness among you which will make every boy look up to you as a man who will frown upon everything that will disparage the good name of his school, as it is known by the character of its pupils.

The next word is *affection*. You owe this first of all to your parents if they be living, or to those next of kin who have charge of you; to your schoolmates, to your teachers. It was an apostle who said—and it was the same who rescued Timothy from his Jewish religion and made him a Christian—it was an apostle who said, “*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.*” Did you ever think what a blessed, happy world this would be if this advice of the apostle were followed by all people? It would be almost like heaven.

The last word that I use is *zeal*. These three words—*fidelity, affection, zeal*—are the words that I said were the prominent traits in young Timothy’s character, and might have been those which drew the heart of the apostle so closely toward him. Zeal, spirit, true ambition, persistent, joyous efforts in the right direction, will go far to make one happy and useful in whatever he undertakes in the pursuits of life. This zeal you can apply to your daily studies, to increase interest in your tasks and love of study, for it will bring with it cultivation of mind and heart, growth in all useful knowledge, and love for knowledge, so that the more you know the more useful you can be; and the more good you can do the higher you can rise in all that is useful and good in life. The world is before you all, and with the blessing of God you can do well, all of you; but success will not

come to drones, to lazy fellows who shirk their lessons and who care little whether they do well or ill from day to day as the time passes, and as the day approaches when you must go from school to make your own way in the world.

See what a name young Timothy made for himself! As long as language is spoken or books are read will the name of Timothy be handed down on the brightest records of all history. He obeyed the divine call, he left everything dear to him to follow him who was chosen of God to point him to the Saviour of men. You have heard that call; not from apostolic lips, it is true, but from the lips of those who speak to you in the name of the Lord.

Timothy had a good mother. She had instructed him early and faithfully in the Holy Scriptures. Those Scriptures in his day were the Old Testament only, and in very inconvenient shape and not easily handled or studied; but you have the New Testament also, and these Scriptures are very much more interesting and much more easily understood than the Old Testament Scriptures which Timothy studied at his mother's knee.

These Scriptures (the apostle said) were able to make Timothy wise unto salvation. You read them or you hear them every day; what effect will they have on you? From a babe Timothy had known them,—before he could read, almost as soon as he could talk. You too, it may be, have known of them from your earliest childhood. *What good will they do you?*

How mean ye thus by weeping
To break my very heart?
We both are in Christ's keeping,
And cannot therefore part;
Nor time nor place can sever
The bonds which us have bound;
In Christ abide forever
Who once in him are found.—SPITTA.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.—THE ACTS.

No, neither life, nor death, nor pain, nor joy,
Nor all that worketh in the height or depth,
God's chosen ones can hurt
Or banish from his love.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

CHAPTER XVII.

PAUL AT MILETUS.

THE apostle Paul had spent a week at Troas. What had been the occupation of those seven days we are not informed. Doubtless here, as in other cities, he was going about from house to house, confirming the saints and establishing them in the faith, and preaching Christ and him crucified to those who were ignorant.

But the events of the last hours of his stay there are described with great minuteness. It was the evening of the first day of the week. On the following morning the vessel was to sail, the vessel which was to convey him to Judæa, so that he might reach Jerusalem before the approaching Jewish Pentecost.

The Christians of Troas met and celebrated that feast of love which Christ enjoined upon his followers. The place was an upper room, with a balcony projecting over the outward street, or the inward court. The night was dark, for the moon was still young, and many lamps were burning in the room where the congregation was assembled. The place was hot and probably crowded. The apostle felt that it might be the last time he should address them, and with great earnestness he continued his speech or discourse or conversation until midnight. Here it was that a young man named Eutychus, overcome with exhaustion, heat and weariness, sunk into a deep sleep, fell from his seat in the balcony or window in the third story to the pavement below, and was taken up dead. Paul, imitating the power and the example of that Master whose doctrine he was proclaiming, went down

to the ground, fell upon the dead body, and embracing it said to those about him, "Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him." And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. But the apostle was not yet ready to depart; he longed to continue his labor here. He could not however detain the ship, and knowing that she would touch at Assos, further down the coast and around the cape Lecatum, and that he could reach the same place by going across the country on foot in half the time, he allowed Luke and some of his companions to go on in the vessel, while he prolonged still further his stay and his labors at Troas. A walk of a few hours over the grand old Roman road (for the Romans were famous makers of roads, and their civilization in this direction can be traced everywhere even to this day) would bring him past the hot springs, and through the oak woods—then in full foliage, for it was the spring of the year—which cover that beautiful shore with greenness and shade, and over the mountain streams to Assos.

Here rejoining his vessel, they continued their journey, touching at Mytilene, and the next day passing Chios, the next touching at Samos, tarrying awhile at Trogylgium, coming the next day to Miletus.

At Miletus the vessel remained long enough to send to Ephesus, between thirty and forty miles away to the north, to the elders of the church there to come and meet him. They must have heard of his arrival so near to them with great delight. He had been their pastor for three years, during which he had ceased not to warn every one day and night with tears. You who know the closeness and the tenderness of the relation between Christians and the pastor by whose ministry they are brought to believe, can conceive the eagerness, the haste, with which the elders of the church at

Ephesus would respond to the invitation to come and meet their old pastor. “By those who travel on such an errand that journey would not be regarded long nor tedious, nor would they in that soft climate care much whether it was made by day or night. The elders could easily reach Miletus the day after that on which the summons was received ; and though they might be weary when they arrived, they would soon forget that when they saw their friend and instructor.”

The elders were gathered together by themselves—how many they were we do not know—gathered in some solitary spot, for they would shun observation at such a time ; very probably on the shore within sight of the town of Miletus, and within sight of the ship which was so soon to separate them forever. It moves the profoundest depths of feeling and of nature to stand on any shore and look at the vessel which is to separate dear friends even for a few months ; but here was to be a separation which was to be followed by no reunion except on the shores of eternity.

It must have been an affecting scene. The elders, grave, serious men, probably not without many private Christians who had come with them, bearing in their persons and clothing the marks of travel, were sitting or standing around the apostle to listen to his farewell words.

Behind them stretched away inland the white houses of Miletus, a city whose highest prosperity was reached five hundred years before this, and back of the city the swelling undulations rolling away to the north over which these weary travellers had made their hurried journey. Immediately about them was the sandy beach on which the little boat may have been resting which was to convey them to their ship ; before them was the wide sea on which they were to sail, with the islands in the distance. The apostle, a careworn, anxious

man, stands in the midst of this anxious group to speak to them for the last time. How shall he speak? What shall he say to them? How the memory of the past rises up as he looks on those familiar faces again! How he recalls the instructions of the three years when he went in and out before them, breaking to them the bread of life! Shall he reprove, rebuke or exhort them? Shall he chide them for the past or encourage them for the future? You may see what, at this most solemn and affecting interview, the apostle did say, by reading Acts 20:17-36.

“There is in these concluding words a world of evidence for the authenticity of the speech, whether we consider the unmistakable harmony of the saying with all that we read of our Saviour in the gospels, or the consistency of St. Paul with himself in thus concluding with a reference to his dear Lord and Master, and then immediately kneeling down to pray, or the impossibility that either forgery or tradition could have fitted such a quotation into such a scene.

“Nowhere in all the books that were ever written can we find anything more affecting than the interview of Paul with the Ephesian elders. Hundreds of sermons have been preached from it; its several verses have been made texts on which volumes have been written; it has been read times innumerable when Christian pastors were leaving their fields of labor, and the English church has appointed it to be read at the consecration of her bishops.”

And yet, after all, it is I suppose only an outline of the discourse; a mere epitome of the words which really passed at that memorable interview. It is in the highest degree improbable that the words which are recorded here, and which may be read in five minutes, contain all that was said on that most interesting occasion.

This scene is most interesting to us, even if we are not pastors and have no special care of the church, who are not (as far as we know) about to part from friends for a long time and probably for all time, as the apostle thought was to be his experience,—it is most interesting to us, I say, because it reveals to us again, and in most vivid and softened coloring, the inner life of Paul. We are so in the habit of regarding him as an apostle full of zeal and the Holy Ghost, full of fire and energy, carrying the gospel into heathen cities, periling his life when need be, never shrinking from danger or exposure, accepting all manner of ill treatment from the heathen and from those who had by his means been brought to a knowledge of Christianity, rebuking with sternness those who turned away from the truth, reproving the Roman governor on his tribunal, refusing to leave the prison at Philippi until the Roman magistrates who had abused him came themselves to fetch him out, that we hardly know him as a man like ourselves, but with the kindest heart, the tenderest feelings, the most human sympathies.

It seems quite natural to hear his bold appeal to the elders, calling them to witness his faithfulness during the three years of his ministry among them; how, amidst tears and temptations and conspiracies, he went about among them, seeking no concealment, but teaching them publicly and from house to house, urging both Jew and Greek to repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. All this is in keeping with the true courage which marked his whole career.

“But we see him here as one whose very heart was broken when his brethren wept; who ‘lived if they stood fast in the Lord;’ who ‘was glad when he was weak and they were strong,’ and who was willing to have imparted unto them his own soul, because they were dear unto him.

"He who had the constant contemplation of his Lord and Saviour was nevertheless as susceptible of the affections of human nature and the influences of the external world as if he were a stranger to that contemplation. He who had rest and peace in the love of Christ was not satisfied without the love of man. He whose supreme reward was the approbation of God looked for the approval of his brethren. He loved them not only for 'Jesus' sake,' as he expressed it, but for their own sake also. He lived in them, he felt with and for them, he was anxious about them, he gave them help, and in turn he looked for comfort from them. His mind was like some instrument of music, harp or viol, the strings of which vibrate, though untouched, with the notes which other instruments give forth when swept by a master's hand. Even when he was about to be martyred, still as before he had time to think of his friends, of those who were near him, those who were away, and those who had deserted him. He who is the special preacher of divine grace is also the special friend and intimate of human nature. He who reveals to us the mysteries of God's sovereign decrees manifests at the same time the tenderest interest in the souls of individuals."—*Dr. Newman.*

It must have been a blessed privilege to be present at that meeting and hear that discourse. How eagerly the elders must have looked into that countenance! How would they watch the expression of those eyes that must often, very often during this interview have streamed with tears! We almost regret that some portrait or bust of the great apostle has not been handed down to us. The pictorial representations of his person that have been attempted give only the outlines of form and feature, without attempting the delineation of face. If Raphael, with anything like the genius and skill which guided his pencil and brush in the far-famed Madonna which

makes the Dresden gallery one of the brightest of all picture galleries, had produced an adequate ideal of the apostle Paul, with what delight should we gaze and linger and continue to gaze, and try to bring up in imagination the grand and glorious character depicted there ! That great artist, in his famous cartoons, has represented the apostle in several of the most important incidents of his life ; but the purpose was to represent the scenes and surrounding characters rather than the face of the apostle himself. But we do not need the painter's brush nor the sculptor's chisel ; the New Testament gives the best portraiture to those who study it carefully.

We do not know certainly whether the apostle ever met the elders again, though it is possible he did so, as the traditions of the early church would lead us to suppose.

But we know that within one hundred years from the day on which he parted from them at that sea-side at Miletus he met them all again, unless indeed the grievous wolves, against which he so solemnly warned them, had destroyed some of them ; for within that time his life and that of all the elders had ended, and they had passed from this world of labor and trial and suffering.

What joy it must have been to meet them again ! Some had gone up from the martyr's struggle, and found their old master ready to receive them.

"At the close of this address, they kneeled down on the shore within sound of the waves as they rippled over the level, sandy beach, and he prayed with them all. It was no ordinary prayer. They all united in it, or followed the apostle's prayer with their own broken supplications. There was an irrepressible outbreak of grief and of tears, natural and not sinful ; they fell on Paul's neck, overwhelming him with tears, and with what would seem strange to us but not

to them in the East, kisses of natural, heart-felt affection. They sorrowed over his parting words, over their own desolate condition now that he was about to leave them, over the future so full of apprehension to him, but most of all that they should see his face no more. And then they accompanied him down to the very edge of the water, where he embarked on his long voyage."

It is a blessed thought that if we shall ever reach heaven we may see the apostle Paul, and know him and may be allowed to tell him how we loved to study the history of his life on earth ; how we honored him for his self-sacrifice ; his entire devotion to the work to which he was appointed ; his patience under affliction ; his uncomplaining submission to wrong and violence ; his love of his friends ; his dependence on human sympathy ; his fearless denunciation of wickedness even in high places ; his long-suffering ; his willingness to be anything or do anything for his Master, and his confidence in God through it all.

If there is anything in this life, the greatest I think of all human lives except that of our Lord,—if there is anything in this life to claim your admiration, anything to excite your hearts and move you to acts of self-denial and labor and toil for the same Master whom he served, let me urge you to follow Paul's example as he followed Christ, and take all the comfort you may from the assurance that when you come to lay down this mortal life, and are removed from this world to that other and better life, you will see not only the divine Redeemer whose blood has bought you and whose Spirit has sanctified you, but you will know the spirits of just men made perfect ; and certainly not among the least of these that glorious apostle whose life and character we have been studying, and whose companionship will be ours forever and ever.

And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, and for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak ; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.—ST. MATTHEW.

Paul's powers were not art, but instinct—the finest instinct of courtesy—the noblest generosity of heart. He did not wish for his worst enemies such misfortunes as had fallen to his lot—he did wish for them all such peace and joy and hope as he had in his Lord and Master Christ.—HAWEIS.

O God, who, through the preaching of the blessed apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world ; grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PAUL AND AGRIPPA.

WITH words of bold and earnest declamation did Paul close his address before Agrippa.* The occasion was a memorable one. It was the fifth and last time in the presence of the Jews that he was making his apology or defence. Something more than two years before, he had been arrested in the temple at Jerusalem while in the act of fulfilling a vow, and would have been put to death on the spot but for the timely rescue of the Roman authority. On the way from the temple area to the castle, and even on the stairs, he turned and by permission of the officer made an address to the people, calming their rage by the solemn and sacred tones of their own Hebrew tongue. But when he came to announce his mission, that God had sent him to the Gentiles, they interrupted him with savage fury, shouting, “Away with such a *fellow* from the earth : for it is not fit that he should live.”

The next day he was brought before the Jewish council, but they were in no mood to hear a calm defence, and willfully perverting his first words they threatened him with personal violence, which perhaps was only averted by his reference to the doctrine of the resurrection, the bare mention of which divided the assembly ; the Pharisees and Sadducees (of which it was composed) taking sides for and against Paul, and thus throwing the council into confusion and strife, in the course of which Paul, in danger of being pulled in pieces, was taken by force from among them and restored to the security of his prison.

* Acts, 26th chapter.

This was followed by the flight or hurried march that same night to Caesarea, where, in a few days, the high priest and his orator Tertullus having followed him, Paul made his third defence, winding up again with a reference to the doctrine of the resurrection.

But this trial was partial only. The orator made his charges, but he had no witnesses to prove them; he seems to have forgotten that before a Roman tribunal nothing was taken for granted without proof, and that of all people the Romans had the profoundest respect for the law. Felix, therefore, put off the trial until witnesses should come down from Jerusalem, amusing himself meanwhile by having Paul brought out from time to time before himself and his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, that they might hear the enthusiast preach concerning his faith in Christ.

But Felix was deposed or recalled, and Festus, a new governor, came into the province, and taking the earliest opportunity of going to Jerusalem, he was set upon immediately by the high priest and others, who urged him to send for Paul to Jerusalem, so that they might assassinate him on the way. But Festus refused, saying that he should return to Caesarea in a few days, and charging the Jews to go down and have the trial before him there.

So when Festus returned to Caesarea, the very next day he held a court and commanded Paul to be brought before him. The Jews were there with their old charges, which however they were no more able to prove than before. Crowding round about their long-lost victim, eager as hungry wolves to fasten on him, they yet brought no new complaints, but the old charges of heresy, sacrilege and treason, preferred with clamor and bitterness. The accusations, "which they could not prove," were "many and grievous."

The procurator was perplexed. The charges were of the most serious character ; the prosecutors were dreadfully in earnest. What they lacked in evidence they made up in positiveness and bitterness ; the prisoner was helpless, he had no advocate, no orator, he was alone, without powerful friends ; why should he not be given up to their will ? But this, Festus could not do. The stern Roman law, which he was bound to obey in its application to the humblest person, would not sanction such injustice ; especially he dared not trifle with it so early in his official career ; so it occurred to him that he could keep himself within the statutes and yet cultivate popularity with the Jews by changing the place of trial to Jerusalem. This was exactly what the Jews desired. But the apostle, who knew his legal rights and who knew he could not have a fair trial in Jerusalem, and who knew also that the enmity of the Jews was unprincipled and implacable and would only be satisfied with his death, boldly declared his innocence of any wrong to the Jews, claiming that his judge also knew that he was not guilty, and asserting that if he had done anything worthy of death he was willing to die ; but he denied the right of any man to deliver him to the Jews, and closed by appealing to Cæsar.

“ In the provinces of the Roman empire the supreme criminal jurisdiction was exercised by the governors. To this jurisdiction the provincials were subject without appeal ; but Roman citizens had the right to stop proceedings before the governors by appealing to the tribunes, whose intervention at once changed the case to the ordinary tribunals at Rome. By the mere pronouncing of the words, ‘ I appeal unto Cæsar,’ Paul instantly removed his cause from the magistrate before whom he stood to the supreme tribunal of the emperor at Rome.”

But while waiting for an opportunity to send Paul to Rome, Festus received some distinguished visitors. The young Agrippa and his sister Bernice came from Cæsarea-Philippi, Herod's seat of government, to offer their congratulations to the new procurator at Cæsarea by the sea.

During the time of the visit, and in the course of an ordinary conversation, Paul's name was mentioned. And Festus told the king the story, how his predecessor Felix had left Paul in prison, where he was found by Festus; how when at Jerusalem the Jews had revived their charges and demanded judgment; how he had explained to them the principle of the Roman law that no man could be condemned without being confronted by his accusers; how at his suggestion the Jews had gone down to Cæsarea and the case had been brought up again; how the accusers had really no capital crime to charge against the prisoner, but only certain questions of their own religion, especially with regard to a man named Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive. But, he goes on to say, not with entire frankness however, for he conceals the true reason for his conduct,—but because I doubted of such questions, I proposed that the case should be transferred to Jerusalem for trial; but the prisoner objected to this, and made his appeal to Caesar.

Now Agrippa was a Jew by birth, though his education had been mainly at Rome. He knew at least the theory of the Jewish faith, and that this Jesus who had been referred to so contemptuously by Festus was one who claimed to be the Jewish Messiah. His curiosity therefore was excited to see and hear the man who believed in this Jesus, and he expressed to Festus his desire to hear Paul himself.

With probably no other or higher purpose than to give a sort of amusement to his illustrious guest—an amusement

worthy of such a Roman as Festus was, to whom the enthusiasm and faith of Paul were but a curious phenomenon—Festus made preparations for another hearing.

The scene that occurred on the morrow was almost dramatic. It has been often described, and nothing new can be added to its details. Let us pause a moment, however, on the characters and their place in the scene, that we may better understand what was said and done.

“There are Agrippa and Bernice, who had come with great pomp into the place of hearing. What that ‘great pomp’ may mean we must infer from the fact that these were royal personages, and that in that day, as indeed now, all the crowd of attendants, the personal decorations, the formal and imposing ceremonies that could be summoned were displayed.

“There was Festus the governor, with the sterner dignity that became the real authority, invested with the Roman dress and the symbols of Roman authority; in the hall the chief captains and principals of the city, both Pagans and Jews; and before the king, who seems to have occupied the place of authority, he whom Agrippa had called ‘the man.’

“Paul is now surrounded by the civil and military state of the governor, and with royal visitors professing the Jewish religion seated in the hall with Festus. The governor makes his introductory speech, as uncandid as before, describing in a very few words the case as he had found it and had disposed of it. And then Agrippa, eager to hear what this enthusiast, this pervert from the Jewish faith, would say, graciously permits him to speak for himself.

“Now the apostle has a freer range than ever before. It is no scene of violent excitement now. He is doubtless in a difficult position, for his audience is mixed. But he does not speak under constraint and with the fear at every moment of

a violent interruption. It is true that the chain is on the wrist of that hand which he stretches out while he speaks. He has possibly also suffered in health, for his imprisonment has lasted more than two years ; but he has been for some time under the calm protection of the Roman law. Thus, though here too he is making a ‘defence,’ he can safely take a higher and a more distinctly evangelical ground. Something was due to the fact that here the doctrine of the resurrection, the truth of Christianity, is the turning point, as at Jerusalem it was the mission to the Gentiles ; but there was more in the mere circumstances of the occasion which gave the apostle a wider scope than had been allowed on the stairs of the temple. Thus, if Luke’s plain narrative is a colorless sketch of the conversion, and the account given by Paul himself in the temple court was a Jewish picture of the same event, we have here all the Christian features marked as strongly as possible. On the former occasion he addressed the infuriated populace, and made his defence against the charges with which he was hotly pressed, of profaning the temple and apostatizing from the Jewish law. He now passes by these accusations, and addressing himself to a more dispassionate hearer he takes the highest ground, and holds himself up as the apostle and messenger of God. With this view therefore he paints in more striking colors the awful scene of his conversion, and repeats more minutely that heavenly call which it was impossible for him to disobey, and in obeying which, though he incurred the displeasure of his countrymen, he continued to receive the divine favor.”—*Howson.*

It is not necessary here to follow the apostle in the successive steps of his defence or apology. It is enough to say that he insisted more than ever on the close connection between prophecy and the new faith ; that he admitted no other

crime than that of believing in the fulfillment of a promise which the Jews themselves believed in, but which they refused to believe had been fulfilled in Jesus, and that the Messiah whom Moses and the prophets had foretold and preached was in reality Jesus of Nazareth.

We naturally look to see what effect the apostle's speech had upon his various hearers.

The Roman heard him till he spoke of Christ as the first that had risen from the dead, and then scornfully interrupted him. "Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning doth turn thee to madness." He cannot understand his earnestness, so unlike the calm indifference with which religious subjects were regarded by the upper classes in Rome. He regards Paul as an enthusiast, as acting under an infatuation which could spring only from insanity.

But the apostle, with exceeding tact and courtesy, reminds the governor that the apology was not addressed to him but to the king; and then appealed to Agrippa as a witness of the truth of the prophets. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

What was the effect upon Agrippa? His answer is one of the most familiar phrases in the Scriptures, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" and yet its meaning is not absolutely certain.

It has been variously represented as a trivial jest, a bitter sarcasm, a grave irony, a burst of anger, an expression of a sincere conviction.

Literally it is something like this, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian."

It may be that Agrippa is describing what he thought Paul was fancying in his own mind, reckoning on the persuasions he had expressed, and that he speaks of something not that

he (Agrippa) is likely to become, but some condition of mind that in Agrippa contrasts strangely with his present worldly condition and intentions ; thus, “ Lightly (that is, with small trouble) art thou persuading thyself that thou canst make me a Christian ;” and the words, in connection with Paul’s having attempted to make Agrippa a witness on his side, may be understood thus, “ I am not so easy to be made a Christian of as thou supposest.”

There was another hearer who occupied in part the royal seat that day. What was the effect upon her ? for she too was a deeply-interested spectator of all that was said and done there. History tells us nothing of her impressions on that day, but as to her subsequent life it tells us, alas, too much. It is a life that cannot be dwelt upon in its details ; it is enough for us to know that whatever the effect the apostle’s preaching might have had upon others, upon her heart and life at least it was powerless.



BERNICE (ON A COIN OF POLEMO II.).

Rest comes at length ; though life be long and dreary,
The day must dawn, and darksome night be past ;
All journeys end in welcomes to the weary,
And heaven, the heart's true home, will come at last.

—F. W. FABER.

Enough, O Paul, enough ; and now
A crown in heaven awaits thy brow ;
Thy earthly toils are nearly done,
Thy heavenly prize is all but won :
Long tossed by ills, on land and sea,
The shore is all but gained by thee.

—*Parisian Breviary*.

Measure thy life by loss instead of gain ;
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth ;
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice,
And whoso suffers most hath most to give.

—H. E. HAMILTON KING.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VOYAGE AND SHIPWRECK.

"AFTER two years imprisonment at Cæsarea by the sea, and repeated examinations before Felix and Festus, successive Roman governors, and before King Agrippa the last of the Herod family, Paul appealed unto Cæsar."

It became necessary therefore to send him to Rome; and probably preparations were made to send him by the earliest opportunity. In the harbor there would seem to have been no ship bound to Italy; but there was a merchantman on her way from Egypt to Adramyttium, a seaport in Asia Minor, and in this vessel they embarked, expecting at some port where they might touch to find a vessel on her way to Italy.

Of those who embarked on this vessel we know the names of the apostle Paul, and of Luke and Aristarchus his companions, and of Julius the centurion. There were "other prisoners" besides Paul; for it was not uncommon to send persons to Rome if they appealed to the imperial court; but we know nothing of their circumstances, nor even their names; and these were all under the care of Julius the centurion, or as we should say captain, who had with him soldiers. He seems to have been a very sensible person, courteous and gentlemanly, and his generous treatment of the apostle is quite remarkable.

It was about the middle or latter part of August, A.D. 58, that the vessel weighed her anchors and set sail on her north-easterly course. She was a coasting vessel (in fact most ships of that day "hugged the shore"), and the view from the deck of the vessel must have been most interesting. There were

the mountains of Samaria in the background, then the bold front of Mount Carmel, then the city of Ptolemais; beyond were the hills about Nazareth, perhaps the heads of Gilboa and Tabor; then the white cliffs of Cape Blanco, and Tyre with its crowded port; and then, far away, the southern ridges of Lebanon; and so on until they reached the safe harbor of Sidon. But there was no wharf here, and the ship lay off in the roadstead, and communicated with the shore by little boats, just as the steamers lay off now, and land or take off their passengers. Just here it is noted for the first time that Julius the centurion treats his prisoner with considerate courtesy and kindness; for he permits him to go ashore to see his friends and "refresh himself." Dean Alford says on this passage, "Getting attention paid him by his friends, which perhaps was to obtain from them that outfit for the voyage which, on account of the official precision of his custody at Cæsarea, he would not there be provided with." The dean was laughed at for this, as it was supposed, fanciful explanation; but Dean Plumptre says the Greek word suggests the thought of a provision of personal comforts, clothing and the like. The apostle knew the discomforts of the sea (he had been shipwrecked three times before this), and we all know how essential to comfort it is to make special arrangements of dress, even in our easy-going and comfortable steamers.

I do not see therefore that our reverence for the apostle Paul will be in the least degree abated if we think of him as supplying himself and his companions with figs and other fruits, things essential to health and comfort in a long voyage, more especially to one who had suffered an imprisonment of two years.

The purpose, whatever it was, for which the vessel stopped

at Sidon having been accomplished, she set sail again. Here occurs (Acts 27 : 4) an expression which it is important we should rightly understand. It is said, “we sailed under Cyprus.” Assuming it to mean “under the lee of Cyprus” (Revised Version), that is, in the smooth water which would be produced by having the island between the ship and the wind, the question arises, from what direction was the wind blowing so that it was said, “we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary”?

Much has been written on this subject, and until recently the general impression has been that the wind was from the east, and that “under Cyprus” meant to the south of that island.

There are two reasons for supposing this theory to be erroneous. The first is that it was known that at this season of the year, August, the prevailing winds were from the west or northwest; and the second reason is that it is said, in the next verse (v. 5), “when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia.” Now the Greek word which is translated over should have been translated through or across; and as the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia must have been to the north of Cyprus, that is, between the island and the mainland, if they sailed through it they must have passed round the eastern end of the island, thus protecting themselves from the force of the west wind; and so running up into the bay of Issus, they thus had the shelter of the shore, which here runs northeast and southwest.

There is still another reason for this course in the well-known fact that between this island and the continent, especially near the northern shore, the currents are from east to west.

From this point I suppose it was necessary to begin that

tedious process of sailing, now happily overcome by the use of steam, which the sailors call “beating to windward,” which means sailing toward that point from which the wind is blowing. The vessel tacks from side to side in her zigzag course, keeping her head as near to the wind as possible, without allowing her sails to flap by keeping too close to the wind.

In this manner I suppose they sailed through the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, having Cyprus on their left and “hugging the shore” off the mainland, where they found smooth water.

Nothing else important occurs, that is mentioned, until they reach the port of Myra in Lycia, then a place of much consequence and population, as may be inferred from the magnitude of its ruins, especially its theatre, but now a desolate waste. This is one of the “coasts of Asia” referred to in the second verse of the chapter.

Here it became necessary to change ships, for the vessel in which they had made the voyage thus far was bound to Adramyttium, a port far up the *Ægean* and quite out of the direct way to Italy; unless indeed it had been the intention of the centurion to make the journey by land over the famous road called the *Via Egnatia*. This road the Romans had built across Greece to Asia, connecting their eastern possessions through the port of Brundusium, now *Brindisi*, on the Adriatic. This, however, is not probable, for it involves several changes of conveyance, adding of course largely to the cost of the transportation of prisoners. The centurion found here an Egyptian corn-ship sailing direct to Italy; and this would in every way be the safest and the cheapest mode of travel.

But now the question comes up, why was an Egyptian ves-

sel, laden with wheat and bound to Italy, so far out of her course? What was she doing here? For her direct course would have been far to the south of Crete.

The answer is, that with the prevailing westerly winds and without the aid of quadrant and compass and sailing charts, so indispensable now, she had been driven out of her course, and finding herself among the islands had sought their protection and favorable currents, just as Paul's ship had. She seems to have been a larger ship than that in which the apostle had come from Cæsarea, for she was able to accommodate the centurion and his party in addition to her own crew and cargo. We learn, later on, that the whole number of persons on this ship was two hundred and seventy-six; and no small vessel could carry such a number with any degree of safety.

They now proceeded on their voyage in this vessel, which we may suppose was somewhat crowded. We cannot help asking a question or two as to the accommodations there may have been. Saloon passengers in a modern steamship, who are provided with the luxurious table of a first-class hotel, and whose sleeping apartments, although not large, certainly are well furnished, when they look in upon the steerage passengers and see their crowded condition, their hard benches, their untidily-served meals, their total want of privacy and retirement, may reflect that the apostle Paul was, in all probability, much less comfortably lodged and fed and cared for than are steerage passengers coming to our shores.

The real difficulties of the voyage began now. The winds were still head-winds. For several days (oh, how long we consider two or three days at sea!), with frequent "tacking" the progress was slow; the wind was contrary; they were "beating to windward" again. Threading their way among the

many beautiful islands that sit like gems in those bright seas, and stretching their course now on one tack, now on the other, probably anchoring at night under the lee of an island for safety, they were "many days" sailing a distance of perhaps a hundred and twenty miles, which, with favorable winds, they could easily have accomplished in a day or two. The ship had thus worked her way to Cnidus, or near that place, which is the extreme western cape of the southern part of Asia Minor. So far she had had the advantage of the weather-shore and smooth water and favorable currents. But at this point all these conditions were changed. Cnidus is at the entrance of the *Æ*gean from the east, and sailing beyond this point to the west must be out in the open sea. Now they were exposed to the full force of the northwest wind and the long swell of the unbroken sea. It was impossible for the vessel to make headway against these adverse elements, and accordingly her course, which, with favorable winds, would have been nearly due west, was changed suddenly to the southwest, to seek the shelter of the long narrow island of Crete, now called Candia. Having reached this point, "over against Salmone; and hardly passing it," the vessel found herself again in smooth water, and continued her course to the west.

The expression in the eighth verse, "hardly passing it," seems to require explanation. If the wind was from the northwest, and if the vessel was sailing southwest (which would be an easy course to take with such a wind), what difficulty would there be in rounding that cape? The difficulty vanishes if we change the position of the word "hardly," which means "with difficulty," and say, "we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone, and passing it hardly came to a place which is called the 'Fair Havens.'"

Now in rounding that cape the vessel's course would be changed from the southwest and south to the west, and, the wind being from the northwest, no vessel rigged as this one was could proceed on her course due west (which it must do to retain the shelter of the island) without "tacking" or "beating to windward," and this was a difficult matter for such a vessel, although now having the advantage of smooth water under the lee of the island. In this manner, therefore, "hardly," or with difficulty, she worked her way to the harbor of the Fair Havens, which is the farthest point to the west that a vessel with a northwest wind could reach. This was a good harbor only while the wind was from the north or northwest, and here they seem to have waited until the wind changed. But there was a long delay here—too long for the success of their plan; for, but for these unexpected delays, they counted on reaching Italy before the stormy season set in. The season was now far advanced, and navigation became dangerous or unsafe; that is, so long a voyage could not be undertaken safely because of the prevalence of storms, when the clouds would obscure the sun and stars, on which they were so dependent for the direction of their course. The "fast" referred to here is the Jewish fast of expiation or atonement, which occurs about the time of the autumnal equinox, and on the 24th of September in that year, A.D. 58.

It was at this point that Paul, by the courtesy of Julius the centurion, who had seen enough of him by this time to know that he had a clear head and sound judgment (although he did not take his advice), ventured to suggest that it would be better to remain in this harbor than to continue the voyage. He gave it as his conviction, formed no doubt from what he had seen of the working of this vessel, as well as from former experience, rather than from divine inspiration, that a con-

tinuance of the voyage would be followed by the loss of the ship and cargo and some lives.

This statement seems to have led to a consultation between the centurion and the officers of the vessel, some taking the view of the apostle, that there was risk in so long a voyage so late in the season ; but a majority, who deemed the harbor unsafe to winter in (especially with southeast winds), favored the view of the centurion, with whom the owner of the vessel and the captain or sailing-master agreed, which was, to see if they could not reach the port of Phenice, a really safe harbor still further on their course, and if need be winter there. The use of the words “if by any means” (27:12) indicates that the majority thought that even this comparatively short passage would be attended with peril.

This harbor of Phenice was thought to be the only bay on that coast where a vessel could securely winter. Much has been written to explain the topography of the harbor, lying, as it is said, “toward the southwest and toward the northwest”; but as the ship never reached it, we need not trouble ourselves about it. No indentation on that coast now seems to answer exactly this description.

How long they lay in the harbor of Fair Havens we do not know. A gentle breeze sprung up from the south, and before it had time to start much of a swell in the sea, which would have exposed them to the dangers of a lee shore, they set sail and rounded the cape, only three or four miles away, and bore off northwest for their desired haven, thirty-four miles distant, “hugging the shore,” or, as our narrative has it, “sailed close by Crete.” So they sailed along, with the wind about two points abaft the beam, with a sense of perfect security, towing their little boat (they seem to have had but one) after them, as if they were on a holiday excursion.

But before they had passed over probably half the distance the storm broke upon them. The wind is called Euroclydon (Revised Version, Euraquilo), which means wide wave or broad billow. "The Greek word is found nowhere else, and may be regarded, as Luke reports, as actually used by the sailors on board." Dr. Howson says "the name indicates the commotion on the sea which the wind produced."

But where did this wind come from—from what direction? The narrative says "there arose against IT a tempestuous wind;" and we should without question say "it" meant the ship, except that the Greek word here is in the feminine gender, while the word used for the ship elsewhere is uniformly neuter. I am not able to explain this quite satisfactorily, but I believe the grammatical construction of the sentence will admit of the interpretation that "the wind drove down on us from Crete"; and with this the subsequent conditions agree.

All bodies of water, inland as well as oceans, that are bordered by mountainous coast lines are subject to sudden and violent changes of wind. This was notably so in the Sea of Galilee, and is so in Lake George in our country, somewhat like Galilee. The wind which drove this vessel away from Crete and toward the southwest was from the northeast. It came rushing down the gorges in the mountains with the violence of a hurricane or a cyclone, and caught this vessel, seizing it and whirling it round as if it had been a bubble. She could not bear up into the wind so as to reach the harbor,—that is, she could not face the wind, could not look at it; an expression doubtless drawn from the practice of the ancients of painting an eye on each side of the bow of their ships. Not being able to keep the head of the vessel to the wind, they "let her drive"; in other words, yielding to the

force of the wind, they "gave way to it" (Revised Version), they were borne along to the leeward by scudding. This brought them in a few hours (the distance was only twenty miles or so) to the island of Clauda, now called Gozzo; and gladly availing themselves of its protection, they rounded its eastern cape and again found themselves in smooth water. But there were no harbors here and no safe anchorage, and in the temporary security of this windward shore they began to prepare themselves in earnest to resist the fury of the storm. And one of the first things they did was to secure their little boat, which, towing astern, had doubtless very early in this scudding process been swamped, and thus dragged by her painter, and full of water, after the vessel. It seems that securing the boat was no easy matter. It is hardly likely they had davits by which they could hoist the boat to the deck or to the side of the vessel above the deck. If you are surprised at the fact that there was apparently but one boat for two hundred and seventy-six persons, you must remember that English steamers between New York and Liverpool, which sometimes carry a thousand persons, have only eight boats. It is worth saying just here that our Philadelphia line of steamers to Liverpool carry, in addition to the eight boats, life-rafts on deck sufficient to float all their crew and passengers.

The process necessary to save this boat was to "lay to," that is, throw the ship's head to the wind by a peculiar adjustment of the sails which would stop her progress through the water. In this case it would be her "starboard" side which would be exposed to the wind, and the boat, swinging round on the "port" side and in smooth water, would be more easily handled. Their great anxiety to save the boat may indicate foreboding of the result of their voyage. No

doubt Luke, and perhaps Paul himself, lent a hand in this difficult work : “we were able, with difficulty, to secure the boat” (Revised Version).

The next measure of safety was one which I suppose is quite unusual, if not unknown, nowadays. It was done, however, to a British ship-of-war in battle in 1815. It was “undergirding the ship.” The nautical term for this is “frapping,” which means to pass four or five turns of a rope cable round the hull or frame of a ship, putting it under the bowsprit and paying it out until it comes under the beam at midships, where it is secured as a tourniquet, and so supports the vessel in a storm when there is reason to fear she is not strong enough to ride out the gale. The reason why modern ships are not so likely to need this support is owing in part to the difference in rig. Now, the strain on the vessel, instead of being mainly at one point, is divided or spread over the entire length by the three masts; while in ancient vessels there was one and sometimes only one mast, and on that the huge principal sail was spread, stretched out by a ponderous yard at the mast-head, so that the strain was most severe at one point rather than distributed over the vessel. We must remember that this vessel was caught with all her canvas set.

Having strengthened the hull of the vessel as they best could, their next care was to put her in a proper condition as to sails to ride out the gale. In verse 17 it says, “fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands,” they “strake sail.” This seems a strange expression. Where were these quicksands? They were the Syrtis or sand-banks off the coast of Africa, not so very far away. To strike sail (or strake sail) does not mean to take in all sail; this would have been to deprive themselves of the only means of avoiding the danger, for a ship with no sails set is not under the control of

the rudder. It probably means that they lowered to the deck the spar and rigging connected with the fairweather sails (topsails), if they had any. In this case perhaps it was the heavy yard which vessels now on the Mediterranean and even on the Swiss lakes carry—the lateen rig, as it is called—to us seeming so ponderous and clumsy, but having this advantage at least, of being handled from the deck without sending men aloft, and also of being lowered in the shortest possible time. There was on this vessel probably a sort of foresail, answering somewhat the purpose of, but quite unlike, our jib. This sail was now probably set and the vessel made, as the sailors say, as snug as possible.

Now comes the important question, which way is the vessel to steer? There are but two things for a sailing-ship to do in a gale of wind—

1. To scud; that is, run before the wind.
2. To lay to.

The great danger from scudding is a pooping sea (this is especially so in a tremendous gale); that is, the great waves which are rolling with ever-increasing volume and violence on the stern of the vessel may swamp it, overwhelm it, and the vessel founders. In this case there was another danger: twenty-four hours scudding would have brought shipwreck on the dreaded quicksands of Africa.

The other process is to “lay to”—that is, lay to the wind. This is to put a vessel under a very small amount of sail, called “storm-sails.” By a certain arrangement of these sails the head of the vessel is brought as near as possible to the wind, and all forward motion is stopped, the only care being to keep her from falling into the trough of the sea. Then she simply drifts to leeward, and they, as Luke writes, “were driven.” You can see now that with a northeast wind the

vessel, with her head about north and making no forward progress, would drift nearly due west. Now the tempest poured its full force upon them. They were away from the shelter of the island ; they were out on the open sea. Night came on ; they were drifting helplessly, but the morning light might bring a lull in the gale. No ; it increased, if possible. What remained to be done ? Why, to lighten the ship, as the sailors did far back in Jonah's time, by throwing a part of the cargo overboard ; but happily we do not hear that they proposed to throw Paul overboard as being in some way the cause of the storm. So the precious cargo, the golden Egyptian wheat which they were carrying to Italy, must go over into the sea, and the larger part—that most easily got at—went overboard. But the vessel still labored ; the leak which the undergirding was intended to stop still went on. She must be still further relieved or she would founder ; so on the third day “we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.” What was this tackling ? It probably means the extra spars and rigging which all vessels carried, requiring the help of Luke and his companions to handle, and which would give some such relief as vessels of war obtain in dire extremity by throwing their guns overboard. But a late writer, Dean Plumptre, says that the Greek word for tackling has a wider range than the English, and means beds, personal luggage, and movables of all kinds. Even these the sailors were ready to sacrifice for personal safety.

“ And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on *us*, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.”

No one who has never been in a leaking ship in a long-continued gale can know what is suffered under such circumstances. “ The strain both of mind and body, the incessant

demand for the labor of all the crew, the terror of the passengers, the hopeless working at the pumps, the laboring of the ship's frame, the creaking of the ropes, the gale moaning through them, the driving of the storm, the benumbing effect of the cold and the wet, make up a scene of no ordinary confusion, anxiety and fatigue. But now these evils were much aggravated by the continued overclouding of the sky."

This condition continued for some days. What little conception can we have of this long agony! There was no sunshine, there was no starlight. The leak was gaining on them; this is shown by their repeated "lightening" of the ship. An ancient ship with no compass and with few and insufficient instruments, and not able to see the sun or stars, had no means of keeping a reckoning, and their situation became almost one of despair. They could not tell how long the gale would continue; they did not know where the nearest land lay, nor whether they could reach it if they did know. So passed ten days. How could they cook food under such circumstances? Think of the sea sickness, when even the most delicately-prepared food becomes nauseous! They were nearly famished, and almost worn out with constant watching and working at the pumps. What cries must have gone up from those terrified sailors and soldiers, "every man to his god," as in Jonah's time! Where was the apostle during all this time, and where were his companions? Doubtless helping as they best could the sailors in their extremity. But Paul must have been much in communion with God; for one night there came an angel to him with a message, and the message was for the whole ship's crew. He lost no time in communicating it. He stood among the terrified, exhausted seamen; he reminded them of his advice, given before, that they should not have left Crete. "Sirs," he said,

“you should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now . . . be of good cheer”; the ship will be lost, but your lives will be saved. Who is this that can say such things, and with an air of such authority? How does he know? He is no sailor; can he, this prisoner, be a prophet? “For there stood by me this night,” said he, answering their questioning looks, “the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.”

What angel was this? Did he appear in a bodily form? Did he speak with an audible voice? All these are questions which are natural and easy to ask, but not so easy to answer. The boldness of the apostle’s declaration challenges our admiration: “God, whose I am, and whom I serve.” Christian brethren, is anything finer, grander, than this? God, whose I am, and whom I serve! And the force of the original word means not merely a religious life, simple and beautiful as this is, but external acts of worship and homage and service. This was Paul’s idea of religion: not in a secret service, however conscientious and faithful, but in outward acts and with God’s people. And think of his reward! Lo, God hath given thee all that sail with thee. They should all be saved for his sake; the words mean no less than this.

Sailors, however reckless in the absence of danger, are open to religious impressions, and we may imagine that they gathered round the apostle on the deck of the ship and listened to his words as an admonition and encouragement from the other world, and that they were thus nerved for the toil and difficulty which were immediately before them.

“Howbeit,” he adds, “we must be cast upon a certain

island." This seems to be a prophecy, following, as it does, the communication from God by the angel. But he may not have known the name of the island.

Now the fourteenth night had come, and they were still driven by the violence of the gale (of which we hear of no abatement) "up and down in Adria." During all this time—these fourteen days and nights—the vessel had drifted to leeward, making no headway whatever, the hawsers undergirding her still further hindering that movement. Seamen say that a ship like this and under like circumstances would drift about thirty-six miles in twenty-four hours; and according to this calculation, a ship starting late in the evening from Clauda would find herself about midnight on the fourteenth day within a few miles of the island of Malta (about five hundred miles). So about midnight the sailors thought they were approaching the land, or, as seamen say—measuring everything from their ship—"the land drew near." How they made this discovery is not stated, but in all probability they were made aware of it by that most appalling of all sounds, breakers ahead; and then, straining their eyes through the gloom, on the left they saw the white surge of the foam which the shoaling water threw up, and heard beyond the roar of the waves as they broke on the rocky coast. Here were new terrors. They cast the lead; twenty fathoms! and a little later another cast of the lead; fifteen fathoms! shoaling rapidly. And then, though they could see nothing but the boiling surge, they must have heard with frightful distinctness, over the lee bow, the roar of the waves against the rocks, only a quarter of a mile distant.

There was but one thing left now to do, and that was to anchor; they might hope to hold the leaking ship until daylight. So they "cast four anchors out of the stern," and, in

those plaintive and touching words which go to our hearts as we read them, “wished for the day.” O ye who in agony of body or mind have counted the weary hours of the night by the slow-moving hands of the clock, looking and longing for the first streak of the long-delayed morning, or who have watched by the bed of some dear one in mortal agony through the long night when it seemed as if the day would never break, ye know the full force of those most expressive words, “and wished for the day”!

But why anchor by the stern? Probably to check the ship the sooner; or so that the bow might be nearest the shore when it should become necessary to cut her adrift the next morning. It was not an unusual method of anchoring in ancient vessels; and even as late as Nelson’s day, in the battle of Copenhagen the English ships were anchored by the stern, and did good service in that position, and Lord Nelson said after the battle that he had been led to adopt that plan because he had just been reading the twenty-seventh chapter of the Acts. As we read of four anchors, we must remember that their anchors were not as heavy as ours, or they would not have needed so many. It seems, further on, that they had more than four. The British sailing directions say that the anchorage is generally very good here, and while the cables hold there is no danger, as the anchors will never start. But the danger here was that the ship might “go down at her anchors.”

And now occurred that incident, unhappily not peculiar to that time, which but for the watchful foresight of the apostle might have ended in much loss of life. In the darkness and pouring rain and in the confusion, the vessel heaving and tossing at her anchors, a mutinous plot was formed by the sailors to desert the vessel and make for the shore in the

boat. They lowered the boat under the pretence of laying additional anchors out at the bow to steady her. No sailor could have been imposed upon by this artifice, and it is therefore probable that the captain and his officers might have been in the plot; for Paul, who saw through it, "said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." If these sailors abandon the ship, how can you soldiers, how can we landsmen, manage the ship?

"We need not embarrass ourselves with the question how far the divine promise was dependent on the contingency thus specified." Under this declaration, "except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved," the soldiers, obeying promptly the appeal of the apostle (see his tact in speaking to them), with their short swords "cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off," and away she went in the darkness, and in a few minutes doubtless was dashed in pieces on the rocks.

Then, as the night passed, Paul appealed to the men to take food, assuring them that they should all be saved, reminding them that in the long strain and watch, the continued look-out, they had taken nothing. The English words "taken nothing" are a little more extravagant than the Greek justifies. It means that they had had scant food—only what was absolutely necessary to keep life in them; for it is plainly impossible that men should go a fortnight literally eating nothing. This is not an uncommon expression. Appian speaks of an army which for twenty days had neither food nor sleep; which must mean that they had neither a full meal nor a whole night's sleep.

And now Paul "took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all." I have no doubt he said his "grace" in an audible voice. He did what every man at the head of a family ought to do: he asked the blessing of God on

his food ; and he did this in presence of them all—captain, sailors, centurion, soldiers, passengers, prisoners, all of them ; and his words of good cheer, his assurance of safety for every one, his appeal to God in the blessing asked,—all these show how remarkable an influence he had acquired over all who sailed with him, for in those desperate circumstances they were all of good cheer. After they had eaten and were refreshed, they found that either the ship was still leaking badly or that it was prudent to still further lighten her so that she might get nearer the shore on which she must finally be driven ; so they cast out the remainder of the cargo into the sea. This made the third time they resorted to this extreme measure. Now it was daybreak, and as they looked off toward the shore they did not know where they were. There was no lighthouse, no signal, no familiar headland. Although that island was well known to navigators at that time, this part of it was not well known. The great harbor, now called Valetta, is away from that point. They saw, however, that they were not far from the mouth of a bay some two miles wide ; and into this bay, rock-bound as it was, they saw a creek running, with a sandy beach, and they determined to head the ship for this beach, hoping that the depth of water would enable them to drive her head on ; in other words, to “beach” her.

Having determined on the point to be reached, they resorted to the necessary steps. First they took up the anchors. It seems strange that they should care to secure the anchors when they knew that the vessel would inevitably go to pieces. It should read, “when they had cleared away” or “cut the anchors,” as you read in the margin. (Revised Version, “casting off.”)

The next thing was to loose the rudder bands. The mod-

ern rudder was not known then. Vessels were steered by huge sweeps, one on each side of the stern, somewhat as river rafts of lumber are steered now. When the vessel lay at anchor or at the wharf, these rudders or sweeps were lifted out of the water and secured to the vessel's side. So now, as the vessel was to be put in motion, the rudder bands were loosed and dropped into the sea to guide the ship when she got under way. Next the mainsail, or rather foresail, for the mainyard had been thrown overboard, was hoisted to the wind, and the vessel (the gale still continuing) was headed for the shore. In a few minutes she struck "into a place where two seas met," a channel not more than one hundred yards wide, between the island of Salmonetta and the mainland of Malta. She struck, burying her bow in the sand or mud, but the stern of the vessel being exposed to the violence of the waves was soon broken up.

Before this final catastrophe, however, the atrocious suggestion was made by the soldiers that the prisoners should be killed, lest they should swim out and escape! But the centurion wished to save Paul, although he seems not to have cared for the other prisoners; or, possibly, feeling that he was responsible for Paul's life, inasmuch as he was bound to deliver him at Rome, he kept the soldiers from their purpose, and saved the lives of the helpless prisoners. The vessel was rapidly breaking up, she was going to pieces, and the command was given by the centurion (military discipline was firm to the last) that all who could swim should jump into the sea and get to the land as best they could; and the rest, some on boards, planks from the decks as they were detached by the breaking up, and others on some of the things from the ship, pieces of the bulwarks, anything that would float, reached the land. What a scene of confusion and terror that

must have been! A ship grinding to pieces in the sea, her bow embedded in the sand, not run up on the beach, the waves breaking all around her, all over her, her stern going to pieces, the passengers and crew snatching at anything loose they could lay hands on, some struggling in the water round the vessel, others clinging to the wreck till the last, others fighting their way through the surf as it broke on the beach, but all at last getting safe to shore, in fulfillment of Paul's prediction that not a hair should fall from the head of one of them. "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."

If you should forget everything else said in this chapter, remember this: that God is everywhere; that a human life, that your life, is of great value in his sight; that what seem to us as the incidents or the accidents of life are a part of his providence, a part of his great plan for the good of men; that no incident is too small for his notice, no act too small for his approbation, if a right act; that his power is unlimited, he holds the winds in his hands, "even the winds and the sea obey him;" that he never loses sight of his people; that he saves some for the sake of others; that he can send his angel down to stand by the sleeping couch of his servants, not only on the land, but can reach the prayerful one tossed in his uneasy berth in the rocking ship on the ocean; that though for many days no sun nor stars appear, he can bring light out of darkness and hope out of despair; and that he is just as willing to save you now as he was to save his apostle in the day of his peril. You cannot hope that an angel will appear to you in a vision, but if you, like Paul, serve God in outward and visible acts of worship (so I explain the words), as well as in the secrecy of your own hearts, God's Spirit will dwell with you constantly and forever.

But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.—To THE PHILIPPIANS.

To all—to every one of you: take heed how ye hear; take heed of the things you have heard, lest perchance you drift away from them.—FARRAR.

Even a boy, then, can do at school the duty of a saint; because even a boy can do what is right, and shame the devil; because even a boy can boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake.—FARRAR.

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.—
To TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER XX.

PAUL AND TIMOTHY.

A LONG time ago, an old man, a Christian minister, wrote a letter to a young man who was so dear to him that he often spoke of him as his son, his child.

The young man had been carefully brought up by a mother and grandmother, and had been converted to Christianity by the old man's teaching and by the Spirit of God. So he wrote to him and spoke of him as his son, his true son, because he had been the means of bringing the youth into a new life. The young man had now become a minister himself. The apostle, his spiritual father, sits down to write him a letter. Paul was in Macedonia, or in Corinth ; Timothy was probably in Ephesus. The sea rolled between them. They did not know that they should ever meet again in this world. The old man had been an apostle, a missionary, thirty or forty years. He had endured almost all kinds of hardship ; he had met with the roughest, the most cruel treatment from the people to whom he had preached the gospel, and he knew quite well the hardships which his young friend, his son in the faith, would have to suffer.

So he writes him a letter. He has many things to say, if they could only meet face to face ; but if this may not be, he will at least say as much as he can in writing.

He wants him to be a good minister of Jesus, nourished, made strong, by good doctrine and sound works. He tells him to turn away from all foolishness, and to be faithful in reminding his brethren of the good things which they too had learned from the apostle through the Spirit. He tells

him, further, not to let the people among whom he lives and teaches, especially believers, despise him because he is so young a man ; but he must be an example to them all in his speech, in his general behavior, in the spirit of his life, in his love, his faith, his purity.

After saying or writing some other things, which need not be repeated here, he rather abruptly writes these words : “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine,” or teaching, “for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

It seemed a most natural thing that Paul should desire to say or write good words to Timothy, for Timothy was his own son in the faith ; and among all his converts, and among all the friends who gathered round him wherever he went, there was no one so dear to him, no one so likeminded, as Timothy.

The apostle Paul had been in prison before this, and had barely escaped with his life. His faithful preaching had led to his arrest and confinement in Caesarea, and his transfer from that city to Rome for trial, on his own appeal. He was acquitted, and was again at liberty and again at work. He knew not what the end might be ; probably he expected sooner or later to be again arrested, and most probably convicted and put to death. And so it was indeed at last. He was put to death. And as the grand old apostle charged the young Timothy to be faithful in all things, to be bold and fearless in telling people of their faults and their duties, the rich and the poor alike, he must have thought that the young minister would have very much the same trials, the same experiences, the stonings, the beatings with rods, the hungerings, the thirstings, the cold, the imprisonments, that he himself had suffered.

Sitting in my library and trying to think of some things

proper to write to young people, I seemed to forget the scenes about me. I imagined that I was in the midst of a congregation of the young, and looking into their faces as one does who addresses such an audience. And I fancied that they were looking and listening with deep interest to what I was saying. Then I thought, what words can I say to them which will help them, which will do them good? And I wondered for a moment what words the apostle Paul himself would say if he were in my place and surrounded by such an audience. If you could see him as he was about the time he wrote this letter to Timothy, you would see a man far advanced in life, but probably looking much older than he really was, because his life was a very hard one; his form not tall and straight, but most probably stooping, bowed with cares and hardships, and almost at the end of his journey. I do not know what his features were, neither do I know whether his eyes were keen and bright, or weak with natural infirmity and streaming with tears, as some have supposed. But I know that his face was full of earnestness, for his heart was full of love; and I shall try (with becoming reverence) to imagine what he would feel and what he would say in such circumstances. I think he might say something like this, looking down into your faces :

“ My young friends, I have come a long distance to speak to you. I was once a school-boy, as you are now; I had a sister, such as many of you have; I had parents who trained me religiously in the faith of their fathers. I was a Jewish boy, and was born and lived in my early boyhood in the city of Tarsus, an old city on the banks of a swift, cold river. Back of the city, across the wide plain, was a range of snow-clad mountains, on which the golden light of the sun fell morning and evening. Within sight, in another direction,

was the wide sea. In this city, famous for its great schools, I spent my boyhood until twelve years old, going to school as you do. Then, at that early age, I was sent across that great sea to Jerusalem to attend another school under a famous teacher. Here I grew up to manhood, as you are rapidly growing. I had all the temptations that you have. I was proud, self-willed, stubborn. I thought I was religious ; and, so far as doing certain things, saying my prayers morning and evening, complying with the forms of religion, I was religious. But I was stern and hard, unwilling that other people should be religious except in my way. When I was about twenty-five or thirty years of age, a new religious teacher appeared. He was a plain man, poor, and with a few friends who followed him. He came from a little village of no reputation, far up in the hills of Galilee. His teachings were so unlike those of the Pharisees, to which party I belonged, that we set him down as an impostor, although no one could say a word against his pure life and his wholesome teaching. At first we cared little about him, we despised him ; but when he began to do such wonderful works—healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, and curing the lame and even raising the dead—the people began to follow him in great numbers, and we feared him. We even went so far as to bribe one of his disciples to betray him ; and one moonlight night we followed him out of the city into the olive garden, where his betrayer said we should find him, and there we arrested him. We brought him back to the city ; we took him to the governor's house ; we made our charges against him (his friends all deserted him) ; and early next morning, after allowing the Roman soldiers to strike him, to spit in his face and scourge him with rods, we led him outside of the city, and put him to death by crucifixion. Such was our

hatred of him and his new religion! But this was not the end of it. The rocky grave in which he was buried was found open on the third day, and the body was gone! The soldiers who watched the grave said that while they were asleep his disciples had come and stolen away his body; but there were other people who said that an angel had come down from heaven and rolled away the stone from the grave.

“ But this was not all. His disciples all became preachers; and though we did all we could to prevent it, they went about over the land preaching everywhere, so that multitudes of the people left the old religion and took up with the new. Then we began to persecute them in every way in our power. We hunted them everywhere, we dragged them from their houses, we punished them often even in their synagogues. One of their number, Stephen, and one of the boldest, we arrested and brought before the court, and charged him with teaching the new religion. The high priest asked him what he had to say in defence of the charges, and he replied in an address which ought to have convinced us that he was doing no harm, but was helping the people to believe the Scriptures aright; but he grew very earnest toward the last, and said such cutting things to us that we were filled with rage. We interrupted him in his defence, for his words cut us to the heart; and as he looked up to heaven and said he saw the Son of man, this Jesus whom he had preached, standing on the right hand of God, we filled the air with our shouts; we stopped our ears to keep from hearing any more; we ran upon him with one accord; we hurried him out of the temple lest the holy place should be defiled with his blood; we carried him beyond the city wall; we stoned him to death. I had given my vote against him; I held the clothes of those who did the bloody deed; I consented to it; I heard his

dying words, and they seem to have been ringing in my ears ever since: ‘Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.’ ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ But the persecution went on, and I was foremost among those who hunted the Christians to death. After a while it was determined to follow these people to other cities, and I was selected to go to the distant city of Damascus. I was more than willing to go. I made up a caravan. I left Jerusalem behind me and made my way to the north. The hills stretched out before me; the broad valley of the Jordan lay to the right; beyond the Sea of Galilee were the snow-capped mountains of Lebanon, and then the dreary way over the rolling desert toward the city of Damascus. But just before we reached the city, about noon, under the bright sunshine, suddenly a light burst upon us brighter than even that bright sun, and dazzling as a flash of lightning. I fell to the earth, blinded; I heard a voice which I had never heard before, but which I knew to be a divine voice; I saw a form which I knew to be that of Jesus Christ; I arose humbled and subdued; I was changed, converted, turned round, ready and willing to obey the word of Jesus, whatever it might be. Still blinded, I was led into the city, and there, in my darkness, I spent three days without food or drink. Then a man of God, Ananias, came to me and put his hands upon me, and the scales fell from my eyes. I was filled with the Holy Ghost; I arose and was baptized.

“This is my story,” he might say, “and I have come to tell it to you, as I have told it to many others, in the hope that I may persuade you to turn from your evil ways, as I did, to believe in the same Jesus, and be saved.”

I think the apostle might say some such things to you. I am sure he would desire, most earnestly, to say something which would do you good.

What shall I say? I cannot give you my experience, as he did. I have the same kind of interest in you that he would have had; and as I write these words and know how indifferent and thoughtless some of you are, I cannot help saying to each one of my readers, "Take heed unto thyself." And I say this to you because many of you are at that age when you are not much inclined to take heed. You do not like to be serious and thoughtful; you are rather inclined to be indifferent and thoughtless. If I knew that one of you was exposed to that danger, I should surely say, "Take heed; be careful." If I were sending you out on an errand on some morning when the pavements were covered with ice, I should certainly say, "Take heed; take care of your steps."

Now I know that your journey through life is beset with perils. In every street in the great city are houses where "fire-water," as the Indians call it, is sold by the glass; and you will find companions who will invite you to go in and be treated to a glass. "Take heed to thyself"; do not go; as you value your life, do not go. There are, if possible, even worse places than drinking-saloons, and you will be invited to go into them. Do not go. Those houses are the gateways of hell, and you cannot go into them and be innocent. "Take heed to thyself." Never mind what others may do that it is not right to do; do not let them lead you astray. You are to take heed to yourself. If others are determined to go in the broad ways of sin and folly, do not let them drag you with them. "Take heed to thyself." You must take care of your health, that you do not injure it; you must take care of your time, that you do not waste it; you must take care of your mind, and improve it; you must take care of your character, that you do not ruin it;

you must take care of your soul, or you will lose it. Oh, take heed, take heed to thyself!

And now, what do you think,—and what effect will these solemn sentences have upon you? Will you let the matter pass away from your minds and think no more of it? You have heard, as from himself, the story of the great apostle, and you saw how he turned away from the course he was pursuing, to begin a new life in the service of God. What do you think of such a man, and what do you intend to do?

I can say that you will never be reached as Paul was. You will never see that wonderful light which he saw, and which struck him blind. You will never hear that voice which he heard, whose tones crushed and melted him to the earth. No miracle will be wrought in your case; no supernatural vision may reach you, or move any one to go to you. No laying on of hands, no falling of scales from the eyes, no three days of darkness and fasting and silence, is necessary to lead you to repentance and faith. Yet, though no voice that you can hear with the outward ear has called you, you have probably, every one of you, heard in your hearts the divine voice calling upon you to repent and believe. You have listened, but you have not obeyed. Again and again you have heard the call, but you have felt that it was not loud enough, and you have thought that if God meant you to be a Christian now, he would arouse you by a louder call and move you by a more tremendous appeal.

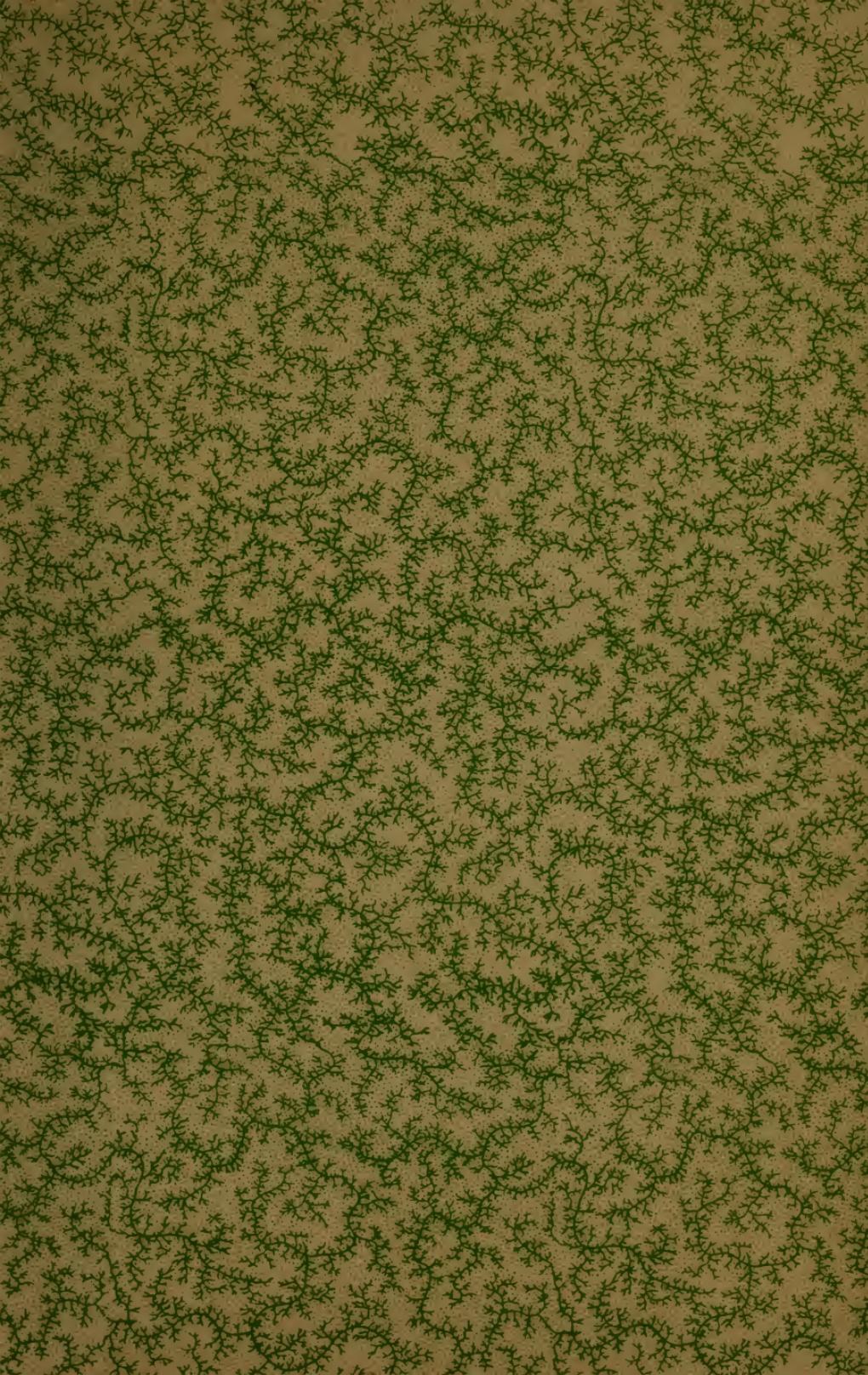
It may never be so. I dare not say it will not; but I do say that you are in danger of provoking God by saying or thinking that he must use other means than he is now using if he wishes to save you. I almost tremble as I say these words to you, for I fear they may be the echo of your own thoughts.

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